

The Significance of the Cross before, during, and after Iconoclasm

Early Christian Aniconism in Constantinople and Asia Minor

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At the time when the emperor Constantine the Great (r. 307–337) employed the cross as a military standard to align himself and his troops with the Christian god, the cross was clearly the paramount Christian symbol. The precise shape of the Constantinian symbol is reported variously; it may have been a cross, a staurogram, or a Christogram.¹ The three symbols of Christ and his martyrdom were often used interchangeably throughout the early Christian period,² but eventually, the cross appears to have taken precedence. It was venerated on Mount Golgotha outside Jerusalem, where Constantine's mother Helena had retrieved

fragments of the True Cross,³ and the symbol signaled the Christianization of the Roman Empire to the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus in western Asia Minor, when these early Christian martyrs returned in the late fourth century after more than a hundred years in hiding.⁴ Later, in response to Byzantine Iconoclasm, its significance appears to have changed as crosses were taken down and replaced by figural images as markers of Orthodox

1 S. Heid, "Vexillum crucis: Das Kreuz als Religions-, Missions- und Imperialsymbol in der frühen Kirche," *RACr* 78 (2002): 191–259, esp. 227–37; P. Weiss, "The Vision of Constantine," *JRA* 16 (2003): 237–59; H. G. Thümmel, *Ikonomie der christlichen Kunst* (Paderborn, 2019), 194–99.

2 K. Wessel, "Christusmonogramm," *RBK* 1 (1966): 1047–50; E. Dinkler and E. Dinkler-von Schubert, "Kreuz I (vorikonoklastisch)," *RBK* 5 (1995): 1–219; C. Breytenbach and C. Zimmermann, *Early Christianity in Lycaonia and Adjacent Areas*, Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity 101 (Leiden, 2017), 15–18. For possible specific references of local Christograms and crosses to local events in Rome and Jerusalem, see G. Noga-Banai, "Between Rome and Jerusalem: The Cross at the Center of a Herrscherbild Composition," *Ikon* 5 (2012): 57–64. For a greater variety of cross forms in early Christian Egypt, see G. Spalding-Stracey, *The Cross in the Visual Culture of Late Antique Egypt*, Texts and Studies in Eastern Christianity 19 (Leiden, 2020).

3 H. A. Klein, *Byzanz, der Westen und das "wahre" Kreuz*, Spätantike–Frühes Christentum–Byzanz, ser. B, no. 17 (Wiesbaden, 2004), 19–47; idem, "Constantine, Helena, and the Cult of the True Cross in Constantinople," in *Byzance et les reliques du Christ*, ed. J. Durand and B. Flusin (Paris, 2004), 31–59; R. Scott, "Alexander the Monk, Discovery of the True Cross," in *Metaphrastes, or, Gained in Translation: Essays and Translations in Honour of Robert H. Jordan*, ed. M. Mullett, Belfast Byzantine Texts and Translations 9 (Belfast, 2004), 157–84; J. W. Drijvers, "Helena Augusta: Cross and Myth," *Millennium* 8 (2011): 125–74.

4 For a summary of the legend and references to various written sources, see N. Zimmermann, "Das Sieben-Schläfer-Zömeterium in Ephesos," *ÖJh* 80 (2011): 407–65; idem, "The Seven Sleepers of Ephesos: From the First Community Cemetery to a Place of Pilgrimage," in *Ephesos from Late Antiquity until the Late Middle Ages*, ed. S. Ladstätter and P. Magdalino, Österreichisches Archäologisches Institut Sonderschriften 58 (Vienna, 2020), 11–72. Cf. also anti-Jewish polemics in defense of the cross and early Islamic attacks on the cross (rather than icons), always as primary symbol of Christianity: G. King, "Islam, Iconoclasm, and the Declaration of Doctrine," *BSO[AS]* 48 (1985): 267–77; L. Brubaker and J. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–850: A History* (Cambridge, 2011), 45, 141–42.

Christianity.⁵ This article looks into the significance of the cross in late antiquity, and asks how and why this changed in the course of Iconoclasm.⁶

As to early Christian “icons,” the opacity of contemporary Byzantine sources before the end of Iconoclasm seems to preclude a narrow definition.⁷ Discussion of the material evidence will offer clarification and show that images other than the wooden panel paintings now identified with the term played key roles in the Iconoclast controversy. This will lead to the conclusions that early Christian aniconism in Constantinople and Asia Minor resulted in few if any figural images in the apse and sanctuary, but allowed for narrative scenes in secondary positions. Such narrative scenes survived Iconoclasm unscathed and were apparently irrelevant to the Iconoclast dispute, presumably because they did not lend themselves to veneration. In contrast, figural apse images were part of the controversy and thus must have been linked to the issue of image veneration. This is not to say that figural apse images were formally worshiped, but they were clearly associated with the question of whether or not images should be displayed for veneration.⁸

5 The precedence of the icon over the cross is expressly stated in iconophile literature by Theodore the Stoudite in his first *Antirrhetis* (PG 99:345–46) and Patriarch Nicephorus I in his third *Antirrhetis* (PG 100:431–32); Klein, *Byzanz, der Westen und das “wahre” Kreuz*, 56. Cf. H. Belting, *Bild und Kult* (Munich, 1990), 185–291.

6 For a timeline of Byzantine Iconoclasm, see C. Mango, “Historical Introduction,” in *Iconoclasm*, ed. A. A. M. Bryer and J. Herrin (Birmingham, 1977), 1–6; P. Schreiner, “Der byzantinische Bilderstreit: Kritische Analyse der zeitgenössischen Meinungen und das Urteil der Nachwelt bis heute,” in *Bisanzio, Roma e l’Italia nell’alto medioevo*, Settimane di studio del centro italiano di studi sull’alto medioevo 34 (Spoleto, 1988), 319–407; P. Speck, “Bilder und Bilderstreit,” in *Byzanz, die Macht der Bilder*, ed. M. Brandt and A. Effenberger (Hildesheim, 1998), 56–67, repr. in P. Speck, *Varia* 7, *Poikila Byzantina* 18 (Bonn, 2000), 53–74; Brubaker and Haldon, *A History*, 69–452.

7 Cf. C. L. Barber, *Figure and Likeness: On the Limits of Representation in Byzantine Iconoclasm* (Princeton, 2002).

8 On early Christian apse images and their devotional appeal in other parts of the late antique empire, cf. B. Brenk, *The Apse, the Image, and the Icon*, *Spätantike–Frühes Christentum–Byzanz*, ser. B, no. 26 (Wiesbaden, 2010); J.-M. Spieser, “Bildprogramm und Raumerlebnis in frühchristlichen und byzantinischen Kirchen,” *Boreas* 35 (2012): 97–112; E. Thunø, *The Apse Mosaic in Early Medieval Rome* (New York, 2015), 129–42; S. Heid, “Das Sehen beim Beten: Visuelle Elemente in der frühchristlichen Liturgie,” in *Das Christusbild*, ed. K. Dietz et al. (Würzburg, 2016), 75–104; A. F. Bergmeier, *Visionserwartung: Visualisierung und Präsenzerfahrung*

The significance of figural apse images and the diminished use of the cross in Byzantium is best attested after the end of Iconoclasm, when icon veneration was firmly enshrined in Orthodox dogma and some earlier apse crosses, possibly including the apse mosaic of Hagia Sophia at Constantinople, were replaced by figural representations.⁹ At Hagia Sophia, a figure of the Virgin dates from 867 and is accompanied by an inscription. It explains that the image marked the restoration of “icons” that had been cast down by “deceivers,” implying that the figure of the Virgin had not only replaced an earlier aniconic mosaic, but also that the aniconic mosaic had replaced an original figure in an act of iconoclasm.¹⁰ The same claim had been made in an inscription on the equally famous icon that replaced a cross above the Chalke, or bronze, Gate to the imperial palace, also in Constantinople.¹¹ The icon was credited to the iconophile (or icon-venerating) empress Irene (r. 780–802), and the inscription blamed Leo III (r. 717–741) for having disrupted the (figural) tradition above the palace gate, that is, for substituting the cross for an original figural representation.

The gravity of such accusations is made plain in the contemporary Khludov Psalter and its famous miniature that likens two iconoclasts, shown whitewashing an icon of Christ, to the Roman soldiers who are crucifying Jesus.¹² In the judgment of iconophile Byzantines, one may infer, substituting a cross for an image of Christ would have amounted to crucifying

des Göttlichen in der Spätantike, *Spätantike–Frühes Christentum–Byzanz*, ser. B, no. 43 (Wiesbaden, 2017).

9 For the depiction of the Virgin in the apse of Hagia Sophia, see R. Cormack, “The Mother of God in the Mosaics of Hagia Sophia at Constantinople,” in *Mother of God: Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art*, ed. M. Vassilaki (Milan, 2000), 107–23.

10 M. D. Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry from Pisides to Geometres*, *WByzSt* 24 (Vienna, 2003), 95–96. This account is mirrored by a homily of Photius delivered on 29 March 867, in which he describes the image of the Virgin being “restored” after it was previously taken down by iconoclasts: C. Mango, *The Homilies of Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople* (Cambridge, MA, 1958), 186–96.

11 F. Iadevaia, ed., *Scriptor incertus* (Messina, 1987), 64; L. Brubaker and J. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era (ca. 680–850): The Sources*, *BBOM* 7 (Aldershot, 2001), 179–80; Brubaker and Haldon, *A History*, 129–30.

12 Folio 67r: M. V. Ščepkina, *Miniatury chludovskoj psaltyri* (Moscow, 1977) (facsimile); K. A. Corrigan, *Visual Polemics in the Ninth-Century Byzantine Psalters* (Cambridge, 1992), 30–31.

Jesus a second time.¹³ This, or rather the reverse action, may also have been the rationale behind other post-Iconoclast substitutions of figures for crosses, for example, in the apse mosaics of the Church of the Dormition at Nicaea/Iznik in western Asia Minor¹⁴ and of St. Sophia at Thessalonike.¹⁵

Following such evidence, modern scholars have seemed to state the obvious when attributing aniconic church decoration to Iconoclasm and identifying the depiction of crosses with an “art of Iconoclasm.”¹⁶ Other evidence, however, is not consistent with this view.¹⁷ Numerous prominent crosses that remained on display and others that were newly painted in the later Byzantine period call into question the extent to which

the symbol fell out of use because crosses had replaced figural images during Iconoclasm.¹⁸

Moreover, the iconophile and post-Iconoclast inscriptions in Hagia Sophia and above the imperial palace gate that appear to link their earlier decorations to iconoclasm cannot be taken at face value. Technical analysis of the apse mosaic in Hagia Sophia has revealed no evidence of iconoclast activity, and the earlier mosaic, which in 867 was replaced by a Virgin and Child, may have been the original early Christian decoration.¹⁹ This decoration may have been a cross, in keeping with the other original mosaics in the apex of the dome, the aisles (figs. 1–3), and the narthex, which were entirely aniconic and focused solely on numerous crosses.²⁰

An image of the cross “in front of the palace” and probably above the Chalke Gate was mentioned approvingly in a letter to Thomas of Claudiopolis by the patriarch Germanos I (715–730) when the cross was first installed by Leo III and his son Constantine V (r. 741–775).²¹ This argues against an iconoclast context, because Germanos was a supporter of images. He would hardly have endorsed a cross that replaced an image, and the letter was quoted (and thus preserved) in the acts of the second Council of Nicaea (the seventh ecumenical council),²² which upheld the piety of icons and revoked earlier iconoclast rulings by Leo and Constantine. The council would surely not have let a

13 This view was actually expressed in so many words by the iconophile patriarch Nicephorus I in his *Apologeticus Major* (PG 100:549): J. F. Aldridge, “The Cross and Its Cult in an Age of Iconoclasm” (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 1993), 74–79. Cf. also the (apocryphal?) story of an iconoclast soldier, who threw a stone at an icon of the Virgin Mary during the siege of Nicaea in 727 and was himself killed by a catapult stone the next day: Theophanes, *Chronographia* (= *Theophanis Chronographia*), ed. C. de Boor, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1883–85), 1:406, lines 5–14. English translation and commentary: C. Mango and R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor* (Oxford, 1997), 559–60. On the apocryphal character see P. Speck, *Kaiser Leon III., die Geschichtswerke des Nikephoros und des Theophanes und der Liber Pontificalis*, Poikila Byzantina 19–20 (Bonn, 2002–3), 491–97.

14 P. A. Underwood, “The Evidence of Restorations in the Sanctuary Mosaics of the Church of the Dormition at Nicaea,” *DOP* 13 (1959): 235–43.

15 The exact chronology is unclear. See R. Cormack, “The Apse Mosaics of S. Sophia, Thessaloniki,” *Δελτ. Χριστ. Αρχ. Έτ.* ser. 4, no. 10 (1980–81): 111–36, repr. in idem, *The Byzantine Eye*, Collected Studies 296 (London, 1989), chap. 5; C. Mavropoulou-Tsioumi, “Hagia Sophia,” in *Mosaics of Thessaloniki*, ed. Ch. Bakirtzis (Athens, 2012), 238–95, esp. 241–58; R. Cormack, “After Iconoclasm—Forwards or Backwards?,” in *The Mosaics of Thessaloniki Revisited*, ed. A. Eastmond and M. Hatzaki (Athens, 2018), 102–17, esp. 102–6.

16 G. Millet, “Les iconoclastes et la croix: À propos d’une inscription de Cappadoce,” *BCH* 34 (1910): 96–109, esp. 100 and passim; N. Thierry, “Mentalité et formulation iconoclastes en Anatolie,” *JSav* (1976): 81–119; M.-F. Auzépy, “La signification religieuse de l’aniconisme byzantine,” in *L’aniconisme dans l’art religieux byzantine*, ed. M. Campagnolo et al. (Geneva, 2015), 1–41, esp. 14; V. Baranov, “Instrument of Death and Tree of Life: Visual Meanings of the Cross in Some Late Antique and Byzantine Monumental Programs,” *Scriinium* 11 (2015): 22–48.

17 A. Wharton Epstein, “The ‘Iconoclast’ Churches of Cappadocia,” in *Iconoclasm*, 103–12, esp. 103; C. Jolivet-Lévy, “De l’aniconisme en Cappadoce,” in *L’aniconisme*, 127–39.

18 J. Lafontaine-Dosogne, “Pour une problématique de la peinture d’église byzantine à l’époque iconoclaste,” *DOP* 41 (1987): 321–37, esp. 335.

19 E. J. W. Hawkins and C. Mango, “The Apse Mosaics of St. Sophia at Istanbul,” *DOP* 19 (1965): 115–48, esp. 125, 147–48.

20 N. B. Teteriatnikov, *Justinianic Mosaics of Hagia Sophia and Their Aftermath*, DOS 47 (Washington, DC, 2017), 91–106; T. Whittemore, *The Mosaics of St. Sophia in Istanbul: Preliminary Report on the First Year of Work, 1931–1932. The Mosaics of the Narthex* (Paris, 1933).

21 A jeweled ceiling cross inside the palace is attested as early as the fourth century: Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 3:49. Cf. H. Leppin, “Zwischen Kirche und Circus: Der Palast von Konstantinopel und die religiöse Repräsentation Constantins des Großen,” in *Herrschaftsverhältnisse und Herrschaftslegitimation: Bau- und Gartenkultur als historische Quellengattung hinsichtlich Manifestation und Legitimation von Herrschaft*, ed. J. Gamzert and I. Nielsen (Berlin, 2015), 129–40, esp. 133–34.

22 *Concilium universale Nicaenum secundum: Concilii actiones IV–V*, ed. E. Lamberz, ACO 2.3.2 (Berlin, 2012), 452–78 and 474–77. Commentary: D. Stein, *Der Beginn des byzantinischen Bilderstreites und seine Entwicklung bis in die 40er Jahre des 8. Jahrhunderts*, MiscByzMonac 25 (Munich, 1980), 70–77.



Fig. 1. Vault mosaic showing a jeweled cross with flaring arms in the western bay of the south aisle of Hagia Sophia at Istanbul, inaugurated in 537. Photo author, 2007.



Fig. 2. Vault mosaic showing a jeweled cross medallion with eight arms in the southeast corner vault of the eastern bay in the south aisle of Hagia Sophia. Photo author, 2007.



Fig. 3.

Vault mosaic showing a jeweled cross with flaring arms in the western bay of the north aisle of Hagia Sophia. The Christian symbol has been obscured twice, once through overpainting and the addition, in the same paint, of oblique lines that connect the ends of the arms and form a shield- or kite-shaped contour (as well as bulging diagonal protuberances at the crossing). Later, the cross or shield/kite was overpainted again, this time with an eight-armed medallion that appears to copy the original Byzantine example in figure 2. The latter method was employed by the Brothers Fossati, who renovated the mosaics in the mid-nineteenth century. The first shield- or kite-shaped painting must date from an earlier, as yet unidentified renovation (see fig. 9). Photo author, 2007.

laudatory mention of the cross pass if it had sealed an act of iconoclasm.²³

23 M.-F. Auzépy, "La destruction de l'icône du Christ de la Chalce par Léon III: Propaganda ou réalité?", *Byzantion* 60 (1990): 445–92, repr. in idem, *L'histoire des iconoclastes*, Bilans de recherche 2 (Paris, 2007), 145–78; Brubaker and Haldon, *A History*, 128–31; P. Magdalino, "The Other Image at the Palace Gate and the Visual Propaganda of Leo III," in *Byzantine Religious Culture: Studies in Honor of Alice-Mary Talbot*, ed. E. Fisher, S. Papaioannou, and D. Sullivan, *The Medieval Mediterranean* 92 (Leiden, 2012), 139–53. V. A. Baranov ("Visual and Ideological Context of the Chalke Inscription at the Entrance to the Great Palace of Constantinople," *Scriinium* 13 [2017]: 19–42) argues for an earlier image of Christ on the Chalke Gate and reconstructs the overall iconography throughout the period as a scene of the Transfiguration, but appears to be contradicted by the Trier Ivory that shows the image of Christ as a large-scale stand-alone bust (see below and figs. 30–31).

P. Speck also argues for an earlier image of Christ on the Chalke Gate, because the *Liber Pontificalis* reports that a new gatehouse with bronze doors and an image of Christ was erected in front of the Lateran Palace in Rome during the papacy of Zacharias (r. 741–752), and Speck assumes that the Roman bronze gate was built in imitation of the Constantinopolitan Chalke Gate, "Chalke" meaning "bronze": Speck, *Kaiser Leon III.*, 603–5. Cf. J. Haldon and B. Ward-Perkins, "Evidence from Rome for the Image of Christ on the Chalke Gate in Constantinople," *BMGS* 23 (1999): 286–96; Brubaker and Haldon, *A History*, 178–79. Alternatively, the Roman bronze gate could have followed the example of earlier Western palace gates, such as the Chalke Gate of the imperial palace at Ravenna that may be depicted in the fifth/sixth-century Palatium mosaic of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo: C. Mango, *The Brazen House: A Study of the Vestibule of the Imperial Palace of Constantinople*, Arkæologisk-kunsthistoriske meddelelser 4.4 (Copenhagen, 1959), 23–24; F. W. Deichmann, *Ravenna: Hauptstadt des spätantiken Abendlandes*, 2 vols. (Stuttgart, 1958–89), 2.1:141–45, 2.3:70–75; M. Johnson, "Towards a History of Theodoric's Building Program," *DOP* 42 (1988): 73–96, esp. 88. The predecessor of Santa Maria Antiqua in Rome may also have been a palace gate: it flanked a stairway to the imperial palace on the Palatine Hill, received a fresco of Maria Regina, and may have served as a gatehouse when the Byzantines reconquered Rome from the Goths in the sixth century: R. Krautheimer, S. Corbett, and V. Frankl, *Corpus basilicarum Christianarum Romae: The Early Christian Basilicas of Rome (IV–IX Cent.)*, vol. 2, Monumenti dell'antichità Cristiana ser. 2, no. 2 (Rome, 1959), 267; A. Augenti, "Continuity and Discontinuity of a Seat of Power: The Palatine Hill from the Fifth to the Tenth Century," in *Early Medieval Rome and the Christian West: Essays in Honour of Donald A. Bullough*, ed. J. Smith (Leiden, 2000), 43–53, esp. 50–51; J. Osborne, "The Cult of Maria Regina in Early Medieval Rome," *Acta IR Norv* 21 = n. s. 7 (2008): 95–106. Contrary to Speck's hypothesis, the Constantinopolitan image of Christ may have imitated the Roman one. The latter might have been seen by several Byzantine legations to Rome, some of whom tried to broker a marriage between the children of Irene and Charlemagne, indicating the high standing that Carolingian Rome enjoyed at Byzantium: M. McCormick, "Diplomacy and the Carolingian Encounter with Byzantium down to the Accession of Charles the Bald," in *Eriugena*, ed. B. McGinn

It seems, then, that iconophile and post-Iconoclast evidence for iconoclasm in the history of Byzantine art can be misleading, as has long since been recognized for Byzantine historiography and its written sources.²⁴ In trying to establish how and why the cross became less important and popular than the icon, this article shall disregard later, post-Iconoclast evidence²⁵ as well as (explicit or implicit) references to a "period" or "art of Iconoclasm." Instead, the following tries to establish the significance of the cross before, during, and after Iconoclasm according to surviving contemporary monuments, whose evidence is not tainted by hindsight, as in the case of later written sources.

To facilitate a fresh approach, this article shall sidestep the abundant scholarly literature on Byzantine

and W. Otten, *Notre Dame Conferences in Medieval Studies* 5 (Notre Dame, 1994), 15–48; J. Herrin, "Constantinople, Rome, and the Franks in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries," in *Byzantine Diplomacy*, ed. J. Shepard and S. Franklin, Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies 1 (Aldershot, 1992), 91–107, repr. in eadem, *Margins and Metropolis* (Princeton, 2013), 220–38; Brubaker and Haldon, *A History*, 256–60.

24 Schreiner, "Bilderstreit"; P. Speck, "Wunderheilige und Bilder: Zur Frage des Beginns der Bilderverehrung," in idem, *Varia* 3, Poikila byzantina 11 (Bonn, 1991), 163–247; idem, *Die Interpolationen in den Akten des Konzils von 787 und die Libri Carolini*, Poikila byzantina 16 (Bonn, 1998); P. Magdalino, "Constantinopolitana," in *Aetos: Studies in Honour of Cyril Mango*, ed. I. Ševčenko and I. Hutter (Stuttgart, 1998), 220–32, esp. 220–27, repr. in idem, *Studies on the History and Topography of Byzantine Constantinople*, Variorum Collected Studies 855 (Aldershot, 2006), chap. 8; Brubaker and Haldon, *A History*, 44–53 and passim. Cf. *Concilium universale Nicaenum secundum: Concilii actiones I–III*, ed. E. Lamberz, ACO 2.3.1 (Berlin, 2008), xxx, n. 125; xxxii–xxxiii, nn. 137, 140; lv, n. 257; lxvi, n. 311; *Concilium universale Nicaenum secundum: Concilii actiones IV–V*, ix, as well as passim, with some qualifications of Speck's emendations as well as with more evidence for interpolation. However, others choose to take later written sources at face value (e.g., R. Price, *The Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea (787)*, TTH 68 [Liverpool, 2018], 1–17). For example, an account of a legendary journey to the Holy Land and how Leo I (457–474) had the Hagia Soros, the chapel for the girdle of the Virgin in the Blachernae shrine, decorated with what would amount to the only known figural apse mosaic in late antique Constantinople: A. Effenberger, "Marienbilder im Blachernenheiligtum," *Millennium* 13 (2016): 275–325, esp. 283–84. Cf. the critical comments by W. Brandes ("Bilder und Synoden," *Rechtsgeschichte* 12 [2008]: 176–82) in a review of H. G. Thümmel, *Die Konzilien zur Bilderfrage im 8. und 9. Jahrhundert: Das 7. Ökumenische Konzil von Nikaia 787* (Paderborn, 2005).

25 This excludes most written sources, as the earliest surviving manuscripts date from after Iconoclasm and are thus under suspicion of post-Iconoclast interpolation, even if the texts were originally written before or during Iconoclasm. See above, n. 24.

Iconoclasm to focus on the archaeological evidence. The survey starts with early Christian monuments before Iconoclasm in Constantinople and Asia Minor, where crosses seem to have held special significance and figural images, generally, were omitted. Evidence from other regions of the late antique empire is mentioned only in passing to highlight what was special about Constantinople and Asia Minor, and to explain what happened during Iconoclasm. Those regions played little, if any, part in Iconoclasm, when they were no longer subject to Byzantine rule, and images there already outnumbered crosses in late antiquity. For the same reason, the issue of figural imagery prior to Iconoclasm must also be addressed, with the focus again on Constantinople and Asia Minor. This is followed by two sections on the period of Iconoclasm, the first pertaining to crosses and the second to icons and apse images. Another section on crosses after Iconoclasm mainly concerns the continuation of earlier aniconic traditions. Finally, a concluding section offers a revised understanding of Byzantine Iconoclasm and how it came about.

Crosses before Iconoclasm

The crosses, staurograms, and Christograms in late antique Constantinople and Asia Minor would have made any later iconoclast cross indistinguishable from the earlier tradition. The most important monument in this respect was Justinian I's (r. 527–565) Hagia Sophia, the signature church of the Byzantine Empire. The apex of the main dome was decorated with a mosaic cross medallion, which Paul the Silentiary describes and hails as protector of the city in a poem written for the church's reinauguration in 562/563.²⁶ The sixth-century decoration, consisting of marble floors and wall revetment, ornamental vault mosaics with crosses, and vegetal garlands on the soffits of the galleries, was

entirely aniconic.²⁷ Figural mosaics were added only after Iconoclasm.²⁸ Most of the crosses in the vaults of the aisles (figs. 1 and 2) and the narthex remained intact and visible until the Ottoman period, when the building was converted into a mosque and most of the Christian symbols were eventually painted over (fig. 3).²⁹

The example of Hagia Sophia appears to have been followed in the vestibule of the new patriarchate that was added to the southwest corner of the cathedral church in the second half of the sixth century.³⁰ Most of the patriarchate has since been lost, but the vestibule survives and forms the southern extension of the narthex.³¹ The vestibule imitated the narthex both in its architectural form and in its decoration, with marble wall revetment and ornamental vault mosaics. A western portal leading from the vestibule into the patriarchate has since been walled up, but its location is marked by cross medallions in the mosaics above and opposite the portal, although the Christian symbols have been obscured by Ottoman paint (figs. 4 and 5). A figural

26 Lines 491–92, 506–7: Paulus Silentiarius, *Descriptio Sanctae Sophiae: Descriptio Ambonis*, ed. C. de Stefani (Berlin, 2011), 49–119; *Three Political Voices from the Age of Justinian: Agapetus, Advice to the Emperor; Dialogue on Political Science; Paul the Silentiary, Description of Hagia Sophia*, tr. P. N. Bell (Liverpool, 2009). Cf. M. Whitby, "The Occasion of Paul the Silentiary's Ekphrasis of S. Sophia," *CQ* 35.1 (1985): 215–28; R. Macrides and P. Magdalino, "The Architecture of Ekphrasis: Construction and Context of Paul the Silentiary's Poem on Hagia Sophia," *BMGs* 12 (1988): 47–82.

27 Floor and walls: A. Guiglia Guidobaldi, "I marmi di Giustiniano: sectilia parietali nella Santa Sofia di Costantinopoli," in *Medioevo mediterraneo: l'Occidente, Bisanzio e l'Islam*, ed. A. C. Quintavalle, I convegni di Parma 7 (Milan, 2007), 160–74; J. J. Herrmann and A. van den Hoek, "Paul the Silentiary, Hagia Sophia, Onyx, Lydia, and Breccia Corallina," in *ASMOSIA XI*, ed. D. Matetić Poljak and K. Marasović (Split, 2018), 345–49.

Vault mosaics: Teteriatnikov, *Mosaics of Hagia Sophia*, 47–109. Soffits: B. Furlas, *Die Mosaiken der Acheiropoietos-Basilika in Thessaloniki*, Millennium Studies 35 (Berlin, 2012), 235–38, pls. 119–20, figs. 400–402; Teteriatnikov, *Mosaics of Hagia Sophia*, 113–29; A. Taddei, "S. Sofia a Costantinopoli: Nuove considerazioni sul rivestimento musivo delle gallerie," in *"Di Bisanzio dirai ciò che è passato, ciò che passa e che sarà": Scritti in onore di Alessandra Guiglia*, ed. S. Pedone and A. Paribeni (Rome, 2018), 17–29.

28 C. Mango, *Materials for the Study of the Mosaics of St. Sophia at Istanbul* (Washington, DC, 1962).

29 G. Fossati, *Aya Sofia, Constantinople, as Recently Restored by Order of H. M. the Sultan Abdul Medjid* (London, 1852); S. Schlüter, *Gaspere Fossatis Restaurierung der Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, 1847–49*, Neue Berner Schriften zur Kunst 6 (Bern, 1999).

30 John of Ephesus, *Ecclesiastical History*, 2:26, 27, 34. Cf. Mango, *Brazen House*, 52.

31 K. Dark and J. Kostenec, "The Patriarchal Palace at Constantinople in the Seventh Century," *JÖB* 64 (2014): 33–40; K. Dark and J. Kostenec, *Hagia Sophia in Context* (Oxford, 2019), 46–50; P. Niewöhner and N. Teteriatnikov, "The South Vestibule of St. Sophia at Istanbul," *DOP* 68 (2014): 117–56. Cf. E. Russo, "Gli ambienti a nord e a sud del nartece di S. Sofia di Costantinopoli," *RIASA*, ser. 3, no. 41 (2018): 143–232, repr. in idem, *Ricerche su S. Sofia di Costantinopoli* (Bologna, 2018), 137–85.



Fig. 4. Ceiling of the southwest vestibule of Hagia Sophia at Istanbul, formerly the vestibule of the patriarchate, second half of the sixth century. The cross medallions on the west and east walls mark the central axis, below which the west wall (at the bottom of the picture) used to contain the “private door” to the patriarchate. Photo author, 2012.



Fig. 5. Mosaic showing the cross medallion, partly hidden by Ottoman paint, on the west wall of the southwest vestibule of Hagia Sophia (cf. fig. 4), formerly the vestibule of the patriarchate, second half of the sixth century. The cross marked the “private door” to the patriarchate that was situated underneath the medallion in the same wall. Photo author, 2012.



Fig. 6. Southern apse dome with a large cross above a *tabula ansata*, part of a rock-cut triconch sanctuary, at Alacahisar, formerly the monastery of St. Sion in Lycia, close to the south coast of Asia Minor, second half of the sixth century. Photo U. Peschlow.



Fig. 7. Partly preserved southern apse and dome with the lower arm of a large cross above a *tabula ansata*, part of a triconch sanctuary, at Karabel/Asarcık Batı, formerly the monastery of St. John at Akalissos in Lycia, middle of the sixth century. Photo author, 2000.

mosaic above the northern door to the narthex was added only after Iconoclasm, when the vestibule was reconfigured as the imperial entrance to the church.³²

In Asia Minor, as in Constantinople, few churches survive with their interior decoration intact, but in two early Christian churches in Lycia, close to the southern coast, the carved decoration is extant and attests to monumental crosses in the apse domes. Both churches were monastic and had three apses arranged as a triconch east of the nave. One church can be identified as the monastery of St. Sion according to the *Life* of St. Nicholas of Sion, who built the church in the sixth century.³³ Its

triconch sanctuary is almost fully preserved because it was carved out of bedrock, as described in the *Life* (fig. 6).³⁴ The *Life* also intimates that the triconch plan was laid out by Nicholas's uncle and mentor, who headed the monastery of St. John at Akalissos,

32 C. Strube, *Die westliche Eingangsseite der Kirchen von Konstantinopel in justinianischer Zeit*, *Schriften zur Geistesgeschichte des östlichen Europa* 6 (Wiesbaden, 1973), 50–56; Niewöhner and Teteriatnikov, “South Vestibule,” 154–55.

33 P. Grossmann and H.-G. Severin, *Frühchristliche und byzantinische Bauten im südöstlichen Lykien*, *IstForsch* 46 (Tübingen, 2003), 104–11; P. Niewöhner, “Neues zum Grab des hl. Nikolaus

von Myra,” *JbAC* 46 (2003): 119–33, esp. 128–32; F. Hild, “Klöster in Lykien,” in *Eukosmia: Studi miscellanei per il 75. di Vincenzo Poggi S. J.*, ed. V. Ruggieri and L. Pieralli (Soveria Mannelli, 2003), 313–34, esp. 315–18; V. Ruggieri, “Apologia della Mimesis: La Santa Sion,” in *Aethiopia fortitudo ejus: Studi in onore di monsignor Osvaldo Raineri*, ed. R. Zarzeczny, *OCA* 298 (Rome, 2015), 391–404; B. İşler, “Alacahisar Church in Kale (Demre) District,” *Eurasian Art and Humanities Journal* 6 (2016): 1–21, fig. 3, <http://dx.doi.org/10.17740/eas.art.2016-V6-01>.

34 *Vita Nicolai Sionitae*, chap. 11 and 39; G. Anrich, *Hagios Nikolaos* (Leipzig, 1913–17); N. Patterson-Ševčenko and I. Ševčenko, *The Life of Saint Nicholas of Sion*, The Archbishop Iakovos Library of Ecclesiastical and Historical Sources 10 (Brookline, MA, 1984); H. Blum, *Die Vita Nicolai Sionitae* (Bonn, 1997); V. Ruggieri, *La vita di San Nicola di Sion* (Rome, 2013).

and its church appears to be the second basilica with a triconch sanctuary.³⁵ The plan of both churches is identical, including baptisteries to the northeast and relic as well as funerary chapels to the south. The triconch of St. John may, in analogy to St. Sion, be reconstructed with three large crosses, one in each semidome, although only the eastern and southern semidomes survive high enough to preserve the remains of crosses with flaring arms above *tabulae ansatae* (fig. 7).³⁶

The apse of St. John also has a second, smaller cross in high relief in the trapezoidal spandrel between the two window arches, above the central window pier.³⁷ The apse of a domed church at Caunus, also in the province of Lycia, but further west along the coast of Asia Minor, had a carved cross in the same position. Its window has collapsed, but a wedge-shaped block carved with a foliate cross was found among the debris and can plausibly be reconstructed as the block between the window arches.³⁸

At St. John in Lycia, yet another cross takes the shape of a window in the springing of the dome above the apse of the southern annex and relic chapel (fig. 8). The apse contains a built-in reliquary. Along the walls of the chapel, three sarcophagi, also decorated with crosses, allowed privileged burial *ad sanctos*.³⁹ The analogous relic chapel at the twin church of St. Sion is the burial site of St. Nicholas, its founding abbot.

In Cappadocia, in central Anatolia, cave churches are also decorated with crosses, and they have survived equally well and are better preserved than the rock-cut sanctuary of St. Sion.⁴⁰ For example, the apse dome

of the early Christian church of St. Sergius or Mesevli Kilisesi/Avclar 9 at Göreme is filled with a large cross medallion in high relief (fig. 9).⁴¹ More crosses are found on the rock-cut nave vaults. The cave churches are typically smaller and lower than their built counterparts. Their low and dark sanctuaries were sometimes hidden by high screens, or *templa*,⁴² whereas the apse dome of a built church is normally well lit and visible above the templon. This may explain why in Cappadocia the decoration tended to be concentrated in the nave rather than the sanctuary. Some early Christian nave vaults are decorated with large, dominant carved crosses and cross medallions (fig. 10),⁴³ recalling the one that Paul the Silentiary describes in the dome of Hagia Sophia.

An early Christian basilica in the ancient city of Syedra, on a southern promontory of the Taurus Mountains—that is, on the Mediterranean coast—on the border between the provinces of Pamphylia and Cilicia, has a cross in fresco.⁴⁴ The basilica is a ruin, and its apse survives at a height of little more than two meters.⁴⁵ One large cross is in the central axis, below the apse window, and a second smaller cross is painted

35 *Vita Nicolai Sionitae* 4. Grossmann and Severin, *Lykien*, 59–90; Niewöhner, “Grab des hl. Nikolaus,” 128–32; Hild, “Klöster in Lykien,” 315–18.

36 R. M. Harrison, “Churches and Chapels of Central Lycia,” *AnatSt* 13 (1963): 117–51, esp. 132, pl. 40a–b.

37 Grossmann and Severin, *Lykien*, pl. 15.

38 N. Peker, “An Early Byzantine Living Cross Relief from Caunus,” *Cedrus* 6 (2018): 453–63. The northern annex chapel of the same church had nonfigural frescoes: C. Işık, “Kaunos-KBID 07 Kazı-Konservasyon-Restorasyon-Onarım Arkeolojik Park Çalışmaları ve Etkinlik,” *Kazı Sonuçları Toplantısı* 30.1 (2008): 1–10, esp. 2–3, 8, fig. 5a and b.

39 B. İşler, “Karabel Asarcıktaki Sion Manastırı Mezar Odası ve Bizans Lahitleri,” *Seleucia* 7 (2017): 161–82. For the identification of the monastery at Karabel/Asarcık Batı with St. John of Akalissos rather than with St. Sion, see n. 35.

40 N. Lemaigre Demesnil, *Architecture rupestre et décor sculpté en Cappadoce (V^e–IX^e siècle)*, BAR International Series 2093 (Oxford,

2010), 162–64; R. Ousterhout, *Visualizing Community: Art, Material Culture, and Settlement in Byzantine Cappadocia* (Washington, DC, 2017), 40.

41 Lemaigre Demesnil, *Architecture rupestre*, 65–68; Ousterhout, *Visualizing Community*, 40–41, figs. 1.20–21.

42 N. B. Teteriatnikov, *The Liturgical Planning of Byzantine Churches in Cappadocia*, *OCA* 252 (Rome, 1996), pl. 2 and more often; N. Asutay-Fleissig, *Templonanlagen in den Höhlenkirchen Kappadokiens*, Europäische Hochschulschriften 28.248 (Frankfurt, 1996); Ousterhout, *Visualizing Community*, 40–55.

43 N. Thierry, *Haut Moyen-âge en Cappadoce: Les églises de la région de Çavuşin*, 2 vols., Bibliothèque archéologique et historique 102 (Paris, 1983–94), 1:117–33; 2:327–28; Lemaigre Demesnil, *Architecture rupestre*, 7–10, 19–20, 37–41, 63–64; C. Jolivet-Lévy and N. Lemaigre Demesnil, *La Cappadoce: Un siècle après G. De Jerphanion* (Paris, 2015), passim; Jolivet-Lévy, “De l’aniconisme en Cappadoce,” 128–29; Ousterhout, *Visualizing Community*, 40–42, 45–49, figs. 1.20, 1.22, 1.29.

For our fig. 10, see N. Thierry and M. Thierry, *Nouvelles églises rupestres du Cappadoce: Région du Hasan Dağı* (Paris, 1963), 89–114; C. Jolivet-Lévy, *Les églises byzantines de Cappadoce: Le programme iconographique de l’abside et de ses abords* (Paris, 1991), 307–10.

44 G. Huber, “Syedra,” *AnzWien* 129 (1993): 27–78; F. Hild and H. Hellenkemper, *Lykien und Pamphylien*, *TIB* 8 = *DenkWien* 320 (Vienna, 2004), 866–69.

45 G. Huber, “Weiteres zu Syedra,” *AnzWien* 138 (2003): 148–65, esp. 152–53.



Fig. 8. Apse with reliquary and cross-shaped window in the springing of the main dome, southern annex chapel at Karabel/Asarcık Batı, formerly the monastery of St. John at Akalissos in Lycia, middle of the sixth century. Photo U. Peschlow.



Fig. 9. Apse dome of the early Christian church of St. Sergius or Mesevli Kilisesi/Avcılar 9 at Göreme in Cappadocia, containing a cross medallion in elevated carving with four flanking dots, one in each quarter. Photo A. L. McMichael, 2013.

on the left side of the apse.⁴⁶ Their date remains conjectural, and a lower layer of plaster with some red paint may have been preparatory⁴⁷ or part of an earlier phase. However, a date during Iconoclasm seems unlikely, as the coastal region suffered Arab raids, starting in the seventh century, and appears to have been largely deserted before the onset of Iconoclasm. Later, presumably in the middle Byzantine period,⁴⁸ the basilica was replaced by a small chapel, which appears to confirm that the early Christian church was ruined during the Invasion period and the crosses date from late antiquity.

Beyond Cappadocia and the Taurus Mountain Range, the cross as the main decorative feature of early Christian churches appears to have extended to the

southeastern fringes of Asia Minor and into northern Mesopotamia.⁴⁹ Examples include several rural churches and oratories in the Tur Abdin mountain range in southeast Turkey, each of which has a carved cross in the apse dome,⁵⁰ not unlike the monastery

49 C. Belting-Ihm, *Die Programme der christlichen Apsismalerei vom 4. Jahrhundert bis zur Mitte des 8. Jahrhunderts*, 2nd ed., ForschKA 4 (Stuttgart, 1992), 76–79, 209–11, 244–45.

50 M. Mundell Mango, “Monophysite Church Decoration,” in *Iconoclasm*, ed. A. Bryer and J. Herrin (Birmingham, 1977), 59–74, esp. 65–67, figs. 9 (Hah, Mar Sovo), 10 (Kefre Ze, Mar Azizael); G. Wießner, *Christliche Kultbauten im Tur Abdin 2: Kultbauten mit longitudinale Schiff*, Göttinger Orientforschungen ser. 2, no. 4.2 (Wiesbaden, 1982–83), Textband 66, 141; Tafelband figs. 35 (Dereici/Qillit, Mar Yuhannan), 70 (Haberli/Basebrin, Mar Dodo). E. Keser-Kayaalp (“Églises et monastères du Tur Abdin,” in *Les églises en monde syriaque*, ed. F. Briquel-Chatonnet, Études syriaques 10 [Paris, 2013], 269–88, figs. 4 [Keferzi, Mor-Azozoyel], 6 [Hah, Mor-Sovo], 9 [Hah, Yoldat Aloho]) suggests a late seventh/early eighth-century date for some (?) churches, which would thus have been built under Arab/Islamic rule, linking this to an aniconic decoration with apse crosses. But as such crosses were common throughout late antiquity, and as Muslims criticized the veneration of crosses as much as that of icons, this reasoning may have to be revised. Cf. also the relatively late

46 G. Huber and N. Zimmermann, “Zu Wandmalerei- und Freskenresten in Hamexia und Syedra (Kilikien),” *AnzWien* 140.2 (2005): 91–111, esp. 94–96, 106–7, plan 2, figs. 8–9.

47 Cf., for example, a mid-sixth-century sinopia that includes a cross with flanking peacocks in the apse of San Apollinare in Classe outside Ravenna: Deichmann, *Ravenna* 2.3:374–75, figs. 106–10.

48 See below, n. 228.



Fig. 10. Ceiling above the crossing of Yılanlı Kilise in the Peristrema/Ihlara Valley, Cappadocia. An early Christian cross in high relief is surrounded by middle Byzantine frescoes. Photo author.

emergence of pronounced Islamic aniconism in the eighth century (C. C. Sahner, "The First Iconoclasm in Islam: A New History of the Edict of Yazid II [AH 104/AD 723]," *Der Islam* 94.1 [2017]: 5–56) and the understanding that Christian iconoclasm in eighth-century Palestine was expressing Christian dogma (H. Maguire, "Moslems, Christians, and Iconoclasm: Erasures from Church Floor Mosaics during the Early Islamic Period," in *Byzantine Art: Recent Studies. Essays in Honor of Lois Drewer*, ed. C. Hourihane [Tempe, AZ, 2011], 111–19; D. Reynolds, "Rethinking Palestinian Iconoclasm," *DOP* 71 [2017]: 1–63) rather than being enforced by Arab/Islamic rule (S. H. Griffith, "Crosses, Icons, and the Image of Christ in Edessa: The Place of Early Iconophobia in the Christian–Muslim Controversies of Early Islamic Times," in *Transformations of Late Antiquity: Essays for Peter Brown*, ed. P. Rousseau and M. Papoutsakis [Farnham, 2009], 63–84; R. Schick, "The Destruction of Images in 8th-century

churches in Lycia (figs. 6 and 7). The monastery of St. Gabriel, also in the Tur Abdin, has a sanctuary vault mosaic with a large radiant cross in a central medallion at the apex of the vault and two smaller crosses in

Palestine," in *Age of Transition: Byzantine Culture in the Islamic World*, ed. H. C. Evans [New Haven, 2015], 132–43). In a more recent paper, E. Keser-Kayaalp relates the same crosses not to Islamic but to Byzantine Iconoclasm: "Church Building in the Tur Abdin in the First Centuries of the Islamic Rule," in *Authority and Control in the Countryside: From Antiquity to Islam in the Mediterranean and Near East (Sixth–Tenth Century)*, ed. A. Delattre, M. Legendre, and P. M. Sijpesteijn (Leiden, 2019), 176–209, esp. 187–89.



Fig. 11. Fresco remains showing a medallion with a radiating cross of light in the apse dome of a chapel, Basilica A at Resafa/Sergiopolis in northern Mesopotamia. Photo U. Peschlow.

additional medallions at the springing of the vault.⁵¹ The apse dome of the Church of the Holy Cross (Basilica A) in the northern Mesopotamian city and pilgrimage site of Resafa/Sergiopolis was carved in the shape of a shell, with a cross and an *oculus* or round window as well as a Christogram in the central axis.⁵² A chapel of the same church has a fresco with a large radiating cross of light in the apse dome (fig. 11).⁵³ The rock-cut church of a probable monastery near Akkese in rural Mesopotamia, about halfway between Edessa/

Urfa and Tella/Constantina, has a large carved cross on a stepped base in the semidome of the apse.⁵⁴

M. Mundell Mango also noticed an absence of figural representations in the same region, including aniconic gold mosaics that Justinian I provided for the cathedral church of St. Sophia at the provincial metropolis of Edessa/Urfa, and she suggested that such austerity might be linked to monophysitism/miaphysitism.⁵⁵ This hypothesis might conceivably be extended to include the aforesaid crosses in Cappadocia,⁵⁶ but the application of similarly aniconic decorative schemes throughout and beyond late antique Asia Minor

51 E. J. W. Hawkins and M. C. Mundell, "The Mosaics of the Monastery of Mār Samuel, Mār Simeon, and Mār Gabriel near Kartmin," *DOP* 27 (1973): 279–96, figs. 7–10, 14–17; W. Jobst, "Wandmosaik und Opus sectile-Paviment der grossen Klosterkirche von Mor Gabriel," in *Mustafa Büyükolancıya Armağan* (Istanbul, 2015), 345–60.

52 T. Ulbert, *Die Basilika des Heiligen Kreuzes in Resafa-Sergiopolis*, Resafa 2 (Mainz, 1986), 35–36, 128–29, fig. 20, pl. 19.1.

53 Hawkins and Mundell, "Mosaics," figs. 22–23; Ulbert, *Die Basilika des Heiligen Kreuzes*, 86–87, fig. 52, pl. 33.1.

54 E. Keser Kayaalp, "A Newly Discovered Rock-Cut Complex: Monastery of Phesilthā?," *IstMitt* 58 (2008): 261–83.

55 A. Palmer, "The Inauguration Anthem of Hagia Sophia in Edessa," *BMGS* 12 (1988): 117–68, esp. 131 (verse 5 [HE] of the Syrian anthem), 158; Mundell Mango, "Monophysite Church Decoration."

56 S. Métivier, *La Cappadoce, IV^e–VI^e siècle*, Byzantina Sorbonensia 22 (Paris, 2005) 230–43 (on monophysitism in Cappadocia); Jolivet-Lévy, "De l'aniconisme en Cappadoce," 128.

appears to lead such reasoning *ad absurdum*,⁵⁷ as the following monuments confirm.

In the opposite direction, two churches with crosses in their apses can be found in eastern Thrace, in the European hinterland of Constantinople. Both monuments are cave churches and thus compare to the rock-cut architecture of Cappadocia. One appears to have been a hagiasma, as it is located above a spring, in the vicinity of Salmydessos/Medeia/Midye/Kıyıköy on the Black Sea coast.⁵⁸ Today deserted, the cave complex seems to have housed a monastery dedicated to St. Nicholas in the modern period, but its Byzantine origins are shrouded in mystery. However, the plan of the church and the rock-cut architectural decoration suggest that the complex was carved in late antiquity.⁵⁹ The apse dome contained aniconic fresco painting—now largely lost—that centered on a cross and included an inscription citing Psalm 92:5. In the absence of any earlier layers of paint, the frescoes may also be dated from late antiquity.⁶⁰

57 Unless one were to make a further distinction between churches that combine apse or dome crosses with narrative figural scenes, as appears to have been common in late antique Asia Minor (see below), and entirely aniconic and therefore possibly non-Chalcedonensian interiors. However, the overall number of monuments that survive with their interior decoration sufficiently intact to exclude the depiction of figures appears too low for a conclusive argument.

58 S. Eyice and N. Thierry, “Le monastère et la source sainte de Midye en Thrace turque,” *CahArch* 20 (1970): 47–76, esp. 55–56, 76 (on the cross in the apse and its attribution to iconoclasm); A. Külzer, *Ostthrakien*, TIB 12 = DenkWien 369 (Vienna, 2008), 521–22, s.v. Medeia.

59 R. Ousterhout, “The Byzantine Architecture of Thrace,” in *Byzantine Thrace*, ed. C. Bakirtzis, N. Zekos, and X. Moniaros = *ByzF* 30 (2011): 489–502, esp. 490; S. Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans: From Diocletian to Süleyman the Magnificent* (New Haven, 2010), 145–46, figs. 146–47.

60 Assignments to Iconoclasm were based on the absence of figural representations (see n. 58, and Lafontaine-Dosogne, “Pour une problématique,” 324) and the biblical quotation, as such quotations also occur in Hagia Irene, St. Sophia, and the Church of the Dormition: Auzépy, “La signification religieuse de l’aniconisme byzantine” (above, n. 16), 14–16 with n. 73. On the latter issue, cf. J. Glynias, “Prayerful Iconoclasts: Psalm Seals and Elite Formation in the First Iconoclast Era (726–750),” *DOP* 71 (2017): 65–93, but also M. Steskal, H. Taeuber, and N. Zimmermann, “Psalmenzitat, Paradieskreuze und Blütenmotive: Zu zwei neu entdeckten Grabhäusern mit spätantiker Malerei in der Hafennekropole von Ephesos,” *ÖJb* 80 (2011): 291–307, esp. 294–301, 303, figs. 7–12. Psalms appear to have been quoted in late antiquity as well as during Iconoclasm and do not lend themselves to accurate dating.

The second Thracian cave church with crosses is found a few kilometers inland on the outskirts of Bizye/Vize.⁶¹ This monument is relatively simple and lacks diagnostic architectural sculpture, but its three aisles, synthronon—as at Salmydessos/Medeia/Midye/Kıyıköy, but smaller—and four crosses with flaring arms in high relief are consistent with a late antique date.⁶² Three crosses are within three niches that decorate the windowless apse; the fourth cross occupies the vault above.

Aniconic decoration with crosses in relic, baptismal, funerary, or other chapels appears to confirm that such was widespread in late antique Constantinople and Asia Minor. A cruciform crypt under the altar of St. Mary Chalkoprateia in Constantinople appears to be original to that fifth-century church for the deposition of relics. It is painted in fresco with three large crosses on otherwise white walls, one cross on each end wall of three cross arms (the fourth cross arm giving onto the entrance staircase).⁶³

In Lycia, a chapel partly cut into the rock above an early Christian basilica known today as Alakilise appears to be roughly contemporary with the church. Inside, the chapel has only one straight wall, which is formed by the rock and decorated with a 163 centimeter high cross in 20 centimeter high relief.⁶⁴ Another chapel was placed inside a former passage under the stadium of Aezani in Phrygia, one of the westernmost cities on the central Anatolian high plateau. The passage opened onto a late antique peristyle court—a house or possibly a monastery from the time after the stadium had fallen out of use.⁶⁵ The walls of the low passage were painted with a row of large jeweled crosses, each

61 S. Eyice, “Trakya’da Bizans Devrine Ait Eserler,” *Belleten* 33.131 (1969): 325–48, esp. 333–34, figs. 10–11; S. Eyice, “Les monuments byzantins de la Thrace turque,” *CorsiRav* 18 (1971): 293–308, esp. 298.

62 Külzer, *Ostthrakien*, 293, s.v. Bizye. Assignments to Iconoclasm were based solely on the absence of figural representations: see n. 61.

63 W. Kleiss, “Grabungen im Bereich der Chalkopratenkirche in Istanbul 1965,” *IstMitt* 16 (1966): 217–40, esp. 223–27, fig. 6; U. Peschlow, “Altar und Reliquie: Form und Nutzung des frühbyzantinischen Reliquienaltars in Konstantinopel,” in *Architektur und Liturgie*, ed. M. Altripp and C. Nauerth, Spätantike–Frühes Christentum–Byzanz, ser. B, no. 21 (Wiesbaden, 2006), 175–202, esp. 190–93.

64 Harrison, “Churches and Chapels of Central Lycia,” 129, fig. 7.

65 F. Stroth, “Aezani,” in *The Archaeology of Byzantine Anatolia*, ed. P. Niewöhner (New York, 2017), 327–32, esp. 328–29, figs. 30.1–2.

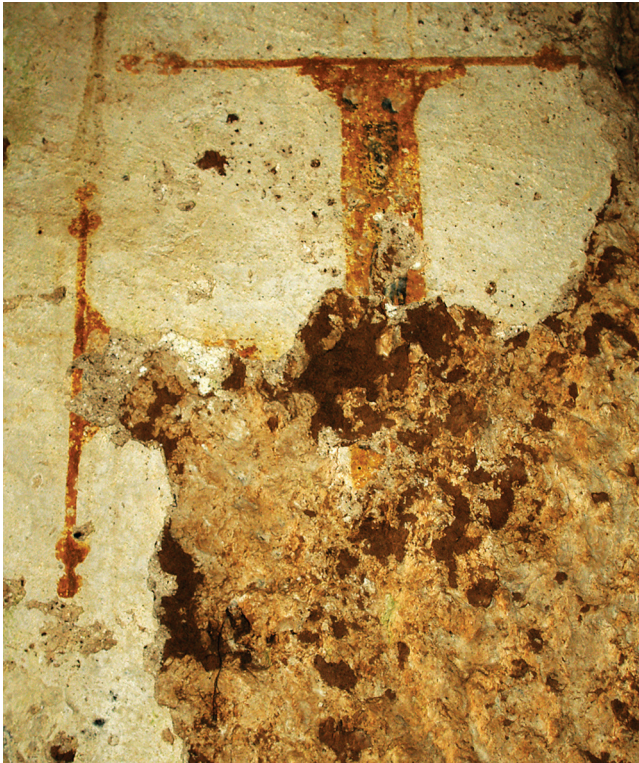
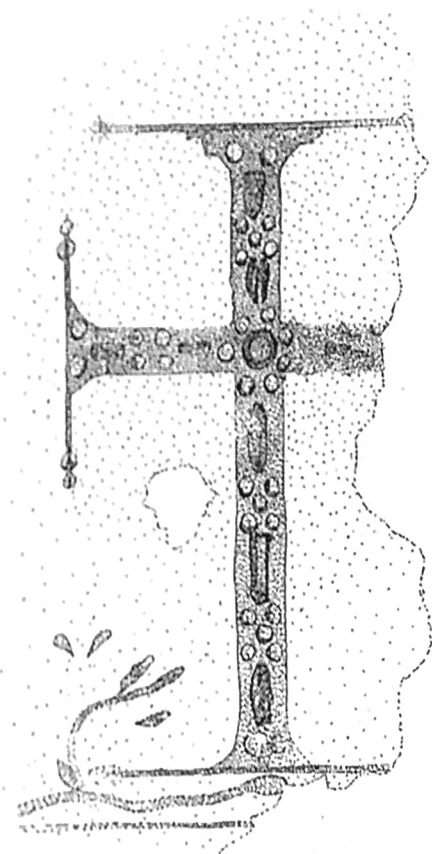


Fig. 12.

Early Christian fresco showing a jeweled cross with flaring arms on the wall of a chapel inside the former stadium of Aezani in Phrygia, on the central Anatolian high plateau. Photo and drawing courtesy German Archaeological Institute Berlin, Aizanoi excavation archive.

at human height (fig. 12).⁶⁶ At Ephesus, on the west coast of Asia Minor, a room with a painted cross has also been identified as a chapel, and the house may have served as a deaconry.⁶⁷

The early Christian baptistery of the cathedral church of St. Mary at Ephesus is decorated with tall crosses; eight stand in high relief from eight piers that surround the central piscina.⁶⁸ Likewise, in the baptistery of the early seventh-century church of St. Michael at Miletus in Caria, further south along the west coast, a fragmentary fresco showing the stepped base of a jeweled cross is preserved above a lower register of marble wall revetment (fig. 13).⁶⁹ The baptistery to the north of the Episcopal Basilica at Olympus in Lycia has cross frescoes on the south wall, the only one for which frescoes have survived.⁷⁰ Further northeast on the southern range of the Taurus Mountains, in rural Pisidia, the



66 P. Niewöhner, *Aizanoi, Dokimion und Anatolien: Stadt und Land, Siedlungs- und Steinmetzwesen vom späteren 4. bis ins 6. Jh. n. Chr.*, Aizanoi 1 = Archäologische Forschungen 23 (Wiesbaden, 2007), 148–51, figs. 14–16.

67 D. Boulasikis and H. Taeuber, “Die Diakonie in der Insula MoI von Ephesos,” *Mitteilungen zur Christlichen Archäologie* 14 (2008): 53–70, esp. 66–70. Cf. cross frescoes in what may have been the chapel of a residence at Caesarea Maritima in Palestine: A. Avdokhin, “A Dipinto from the So-Called ‘Chapel of St. Paul’ (Caesarea Maritima),” *ZPapEpig* 196 (2015): 155–58.

68 J. Keil, F. Knoll, and E. Reisch, *Die Marienkirche in Ephesos*, Forschungen in Ephesos 4.1 (Vienna, 1932), 43–47, figs. 41–42, 46–47; E. Russo, *Sulla cronologia del S. Giovanni e di altri monumenti paleocristiani di Efeso*, Denkwien 400 = Archäologische Forschungen 19 (Vienna, 2010), 202–4, figs. 216–24.

69 P. Niewöhner, *Die byzantinischen Basiliken von Milet*, Milet vol. 1.11 (Berlin, 2016), 55, fig. 75. The stepped base may reflect a memorial cross that Theodosius II erected on Mount Golgotha: Klein, *Byzanz, der Westen und das “wahre” Kreuz*, 51.

70 N. Çorağan, “Olympos’taki Bizans Dönemi’ne Ait Duvar Resimleri,” in *Olympos I: 2000–2014 Araştırma Sonuçları*, ed. B. Y. Olcay Uçkan, AKMED Series in Mediterranean Studies 2 (Istanbul, 2017), 145–66, esp. 151–53, 160–62, figs. 6–7, 11–12.



Fig. 13.
Fresco showing the stepped and jeweled base of a cross in the shape of the True Cross monument on Mount Golgotha, on the southern baptistery wall of St. Michael at Miletus in Caria, on the west coast of Asia Minor, early seventh century. Photo O. Feld; courtesy Hamburg University, Miletus excavation archive.

western baptistery-annex of an early Christian basilica was likewise decorated with fresco crosses.⁷¹

An annex chapel next to the church of St. Mary at Ephesus was painted with aniconic frescoes (now mostly lost) that imitated marble wall revetment, as well as a large jeweled cross in the apse and a rosette in the vault.⁷² It may have been a funerary chapel, and a sixth- or seventh-century date has been suggested.⁷³ Early Christian hypogea tombs in the late antique necropolises of Constantinople, Nicaea/Iznik, Ephesus, and Sardis in western Asia Minor, as well as Amasya in Helenopontus and Ancyra/Ankara and vicinity on the

central Anatolian high plateau, were likewise decorated in fresco with crosses, staurograms, and Christograms, either in paradisiacal settings with garlands, flowers, fruit, and birds, or on a plain, sometimes white (Amasya), background.⁷⁴

71 H. A. Ekinici, "2004 Yılı, Gölhisar, Yusufça Erken Bizans Dönemine Ait Kilise Kurtarma Kazısı," *Müze Kurtarma Kazıları Sempozyumu* 14 (2004): 125–32, esp. 126.

72 Keil, Knoll, and Reisch, *Die Marienkirche in Ephesos*, 72, pl. 4; S. Ladstätter and N. Zimmermann, *Wandmalerei in Ephesos von hellenistischer bis in byzantinische Zeit* (Vienna, 2010), 186–88, figs. 382–84; N. Zimmermann, "Die spätantike und byzantinische Malerei in Ephesos," in *Byzanz: Das Römerreich im Mittelalter*, ed. F. Daim and J. Drauschke (Mainz, 2010), 2.2:615–62, esp. 631–32. Cf. a similar fresco on the wall of what may also have been a funerary chapel at Thessalonike: D. Makropoulou and A. Tzitzibassi, "Σωστική ανασκαφική έρευνα στην οδό Κασσάνδρου 90," *Το Αρχαιολογικό Έργο στη Μακεδονία και στη Θράκη* 7.1 (1993): 355–72, esp. 363, drawing 3.

73 Keil, Knoll, and Reisch (*Die Marienkirche in Ephesos*, 11, 72) identify the chapel as funerary and link its addition to sixth/seventh-century renovations of the church. For more detail on the renovations of the sanctuary, to which the chapel is attached, see A. Degasper, *Die Marienkirche in Ephesos: Die Bauskulptur aus frühchristlicher und byzantinischer Zeit*, *ÖJb* suppl. 14 (Vienna, 2013), 41–50.

74 Constantinople: N. Fıratlı, "Notes sur quelques hypogées paléochrétiens de Constantinople," in *Tortulae*, ed. W. N. Schumacher, *RQ* suppl. 30 (Rome, 1966), 131–39, figs. 4–5, pls. 32b, 34a.

Nicaea/Iznik: N. Fıratlı, "An Early Byzantine Hypogaeum Discovered at Iznik," in *Mansel'e Armağan* (Ankara, 1974), 2:919–32; M. Andaloro and A. Barbet, "Le tombeau paléochrétien d'Iznik," *MÉFRA* 114, no. 1 (2002): 171–85 (same tomb that was first published by Fıratlı); Ü. M. Ermiş, "Son Yıllarda Ortaya Çıkarılan Mezar Odaları Işığında İznik Nekropoller,," *TÜB-AR* 14 (2011): 121–39, esp. 124, figs. 11–15 (another, second tomb with cross fresco).

Ephesus: Steskal, Tacuber, and Zimmermann, "Psalmenzitat, Paradieskreuze und Blütenmotive," 294–301, figs. 7–12; N. Zimmermann, "The Funerary Paintings at Ephesus," in *Antike Malerei zwischen Lokalstil und Zeitstil*, ed. idem, *DenkWien* 468 = *Archäologische Forschungen* 23 (Vienna, 2014), 729–34, esp. 732.

Sardis: H. C. Butler, *The Excavations, Sardis* 1.1 (Leiden, 1922), 174, 181–83, ill. 18, color pls. 4–5; H. Buchwald and G. M. A. Hanfmann, "Christianity: Churches and Cemeteries," in *Sardis from Prehistoric to Roman Times*, ed. Hanfmann (Cambridge, MA, 1983), 191–210, esp. 208, no. 3; V. Rousseau, "Reflection, Ritual, and Memory in the Late Roman Painted Hypogaea at Sardis," *Arts* 8.3.103 (2019), esp. §7, fig. 8, doi:10.3390/arts8030103.

Amasya: M. Doğanbaş, "Preliminary Results of Rescue Excavations in the Roman and Byzantine Necropoleis of Amasya," in *Landscape Dynamics and Settlement Patterns in Northern Anatolia during the Roman and Byzantine Period*, ed. K. Winther-Jacobsen and L. Summerer, *Geographica historica* 32 (Stuttgart, 2015), 193–203, esp. 199–201, fig. 9; İ. Polat, "Amasya İli Merkez İlçesi Kirazlıdere

Fig. 14.
Early Christian sarcophagus
with crosses on all sides,
gray-veined marble from
Proconnesus/Marmara Adası,
today in front of Osman
Hamdi Bey's summer house at
Gebze. In Turkish times, the
box was reused as part of a
fountain next to the Orhan
Mosque at Gebze on the Gulf
of Izmit, which accounts for
three secondary waterspouts
and the partial erasure of
crosses. Photo author, 2007.



Fig. 15.
Early Christian
sarcophagus with crosses
as in figure 14, other sides.
Photo author, 2007.



Fig. 16.
Early Christian sarcophagus
with crosses on all sides,
Museum Pessinus in Galatia,
on the central Anatolian high
plateau. Photo author, 2009.





Fig. 17.
Three local limestone sarcophagi, the central one with crosses, along the road through the eastern necropolis of Corycus in Cilicia, on the south coast of Asia Minor.
Photo J. C. Cubas Diaz.

Numerous early Christian sarcophagi were also decorated with crosses, staurograms, and Christograms, starting with imperial porphyry sarcophagi⁷⁵ and including most others in or from Constantinople made of gray-veined marble from the nearby quarries on Proconnesus/Marmara Adası in the Sea of Marmara (figs. 14 and 15).⁷⁶ The list also comprises all

early Christian sarcophagi known from Asia Minor, including at Pessinus in Galatia (fig. 16), St. John of Akalissos, and elsewhere in Lycia, as well as countless local limestone sarcophagi at Corycus (fig. 17) and elsewhere in Cilicia.⁷⁷ Many more modest graves were marked with crosses, too, for example, at Kütahta (fig. 18), Germia, Amorium, Ancyra/Ankara (fig. 19), Hattuşa/Boğazköy, and elsewhere in central and southern Anatolia.⁷⁸ Cross-shaped gravestones appear to

Mahallesi 100 Ada 65 Parseldeki Nekropol Kurtarma Kazısı," *Müze Kurtarma Kazıları Sempozyumu* 24 (2015): 1–18; B. Uz and F. Suata Alpaslan, "Kirazlıdere (Amasya) Erken Bizans Dönemi Kazı Buluntuları," *Cumhuriyet Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 42.1 (2018), 113–29 (with color images).

Ancyra/Ankara, Hypogea A and B: H. Z. Koşay, "Freskli Bizans Mezarı," *Belleten* 3, nos. 11–12 (1939), 464; U. Peschlow, *Ankara: Die bauarchäologischen Hinterlassenschaften aus römischer und byzantinischer Zeit* (Vienna, 2015), 118–24, pls. 57–59; U. Peschlow, "Ancyra," in *Archaeology of Byzantine Anatolia*, 349–60, esp. 352. Rock-cut hypogeum no. M 392, with early Christian burials and cross decoration, in a Roman necropolis at Gülşehri Mevkii in Çayırhan Belediyesi of Nallıhan İlçesi: O. Cinemre, "Julio polis Nekropolü 2012 Yılı Kazı Çalışmaları," *Müze Kurtarma Kazıları Sempozyumu* 22 (2013): 407–26, esp. 408–9, 422–23, figs. 5–7.

75 N. Asutay-Effenberger and A. Effenberger, *Die Porphyrsarkophage der oströmischen Kaiser, Spätantike–Frühes Christentum–Byzanz*, ser. B, no. 15 (Wiesbaden, 2006); J. G. Deckers and G. Koch, *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage*, vol. 5, *Konstantinopel, Kleinasien-Thracien, Syrien, Palaestina-Arabia* (Wiesbaden, 2018), 1–99.

76 Dinkler and Dinkler-von Schubert, "Kreuz," 60–62; G. Koch, *Frühchristliche Sarkophage* (Munich, 2000), 411–15; Deckers and Koch, *Repertorium*, 1–99 (including sarcophagi at Ravenna that

appear to have been made at Constantinople). The sarcophagus in figs. 14–15 is mentioned by Koch, *Frühchristliche Sarkophage*, 437, 560, n. 17.

77 Asia Minor: Koch, *Frühchristliche Sarkophage*, 558–71, figs. 196–201; Peschlow, *Ankara*, 127–28, pls. 64–65; Deckers and Koch, *Repertorium*, 109–31. Pessinus: P. Lambrechts and R. Bogaert, "Nouvelles données sur l'histoire du christianisme à Pessinonte," in *Beiträge zur alten Geschichte und deren Nachleben: Festschrift für Franz Altheim*, ed. R. Stiehl and H. E. Stier (Berlin, 1969), 552–64. Lycia: see above, n. 39, and B. İşler, "Demre'nin Zeytin Mevkii'ndeki Erken Bizans Dönemi Lahitleri," *Arkeoloji ve Sanat* 153 (2016): 183–98. Cilicia: J. C. Linnemann, *Die Nekropolen von Diokaisareia, Diokaisareia in Kilikien 3* (Berlin, 2013).

78 E. Ivison, "Funerary Archaeology," in *Archaeology of Byzantine Anatolia*, 160–75, esp. 163–64. Cf. Á. Bollók, "The 'Phylactery of the Cross' and Late Antique/Early Medieval Mortuary Practices in the Eastern Mediterranean and on Its Fringes," in *GrenzÜbergänge: Spätromisch, frühchristlich, frühbyzantinisch als Kategorien der historisch-archäologischen Forschung an der mittleren Donau*, ed. I. Bugarski et al., *Forschungen zu Spätantike und Mittelalter* 4 (Remshalden, 2016), 215–30, on the cross as the only acceptable



Fig. 18.
Early Christian gravestone with a cross,
sandstone, Archaeological Museum
Kütahya in Phrygia. The inscription
reads † Ἐτελεύτισεν ὁ δ.ο.ῦ | λος τοῦ θεοῦ
Λέον μιγὶ | Ἀγόστου ἡς τὰς Στριάν | τα †
(The servant of God Leon died in the
month of August on the thirtieth).
Photo author, 2001.



Fig. 19. Early Christian gravestone with a
cross, Lapidarium in the Roman Baths at
Ankara, inv. 117.2.81. The inscription reads
† Ολύμπιος ἐπίσκοπος Ἰουαντων † (Olympius,
bishop of Ivatna). Photo U. Peschlow.



Fig. 20. Cross-shaped early Christian
gravestone, Archaeological Museum
Istanbul, inv. 5885. The inscription reads
† Ενθάδε κατάκιτε Λαπετία γυνή Θεόδωρος
κουβίτορος ετελιόθη μη(νί) Δεκεβρίου
ινδ(ικτιώνος) α † (Here rests Lapetia, wife
of Theodor the surveyor[?]; she died in the
month of December in the first indiction).
Photo author, 2007.

have been unique to Constantinople and northwestern Asia Minor (fig. 20).⁷⁹



The list could be continued, for example, with early Christian cross monuments in the streets of Constantinople and with processional crosses that were paraded along the same streets during late antiquity.⁸⁰ The

apotropaic device according to the Church Fathers as well as archaeological evidence from early Christian burials.

Kütahya: P. Niewöhner, "Frühbyzantinische Steinmetzarbeiten in Kütahya," *IstMitt* 56 (2006): 407–73, esp. 470–72, no. 114, fig. 78.

Germia: A. V. Walser, "Kaiserzeitliche und frühbyzantinische Inschriften aus der Region von Germia in Nordwestgalatien," *Chiron* 43 (2013): 527–619, esp. 563, 571–75, nos. 15, 22, 23, 25, 26, figs. 15, 22, 23, 25, 26; P. Niewöhner, "Bronze Age Höyüks, Iron Age Hilltop Forts, Roman Poleis, and Byzantine Pilgrimage in Germia and Its Vicinity," *AnatSt* 63 (2013): 97–136, esp. fig. 21.

Amorium: C. S. Lightfoot, *A Catalogue of Roman and Byzantine Stone Inscriptions from Amorium and Its Territory*, Amorium Reports 5 (Istanbul, 2017), 57, no. 139, pl. 183.

Ancyra: S. Mitchell and D. French, *The Greek and Latin Inscriptions of Ankara (Ancyra)*, vol. 2, *Late Roman, Byzantine, and Other Texts*, Vestigia 72 (Munich, 2019), 143–94, nos. 366, 369, 373, 378, 383, 393, 397, 400, 405–7, 412, 416 (fig. 19), 418, 420, 420bis.

Hattuşa/Boğazköy: K. Bittel, "Christliche und jüdische Grabsteine," in *Boğazköy*, vol. 5, *Funde aus den Grabungen 1970 und 1971*, ed. idem et al. (Berlin, 1975), 108–13; S. Altun and Ö. Altun, "Isaura Antik Kentindeki Haç Temalı Mezar Stelleri," *Selçuk Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 36 (2016): 481–96; Breytenbach and Zimmermann, *Early Christianity in Lycaonia*, 840–41, figs. 19–20; 846–47, figs. 30–32; 851, figs. 40–41; 835, fig. 45; 855–56, figs. 49–51; 861, figs. 59–60; 863, figs. 63–64.

⁷⁹ H. Kalkan and S. Şahin, "Epigraphische Mitteilungen aus Istanbul 2: Kreuzförmige Grabstelen aus Konstantinupolis," *Epigraphica Anatolica* 24 (1995): 137–48; for our fig. 20, see 140–41, no. 4.

⁸⁰ G. Downey, "A Processional Cross," *BMAA* 12 (1954): 276–80, esp. 280, on a "large and handsome marble cross, evidently designed to stand in the open air," with a "dedication by emperor Leo I (457–474)," that was excavated at the Hebdomon outside Constantinople; Klein, *Byzanz, der Westen und das "wahre" Kreuz*, 51, on a cross to the north of the Forum of Constantine that is attested in the *Parastaseis syntomai chronikai* 30.10–31 and the *Patria of Constantinople* 160.15–20, and was supposedly put up by Constantine the Great; D. Woods, "The Cross in the Public Square: The Column-Mounted Cross c. AD 450–750," in *Salvation According to the Fathers of the Church* (Dublin, 2010), 165–80, esp. 166–69, on the evidence for three such crosses at Constantinople; S. Bralewski, "The Porphyry Column in Constantinople and the Relics of the True Cross," *Studia Ceranea* 1 (2011): 87–100; E. C. Dodd, "Three Early Byzantine Silver Crosses," *DOP* 41 (1987): 165–79; J. Baldovin, *The Urban Character of Christian Worship: The Origins, Development, and Meaning of Stational Liturgy*, *OCA* 228 (Rome, 1987); J. A. Cotsonis, *Byzantine*

cross was also common in less monumental settings. Early Christian cross graffiti and carvings were ubiquitous throughout Constantinople and Asia Minor, sometimes in the shape of more or less invisible apotropaic symbols, for example, brickwork that was later hidden by plaster (figs. 21 and 22), sometimes as ostentatious decoration, including crosses, staurograms, and Christograms on and above doors and gates, as well as on fountains and even floors—not to mention the omnipresence of late Roman and Byzantine coins with crosses, staurograms, and Christograms.⁸¹ Early

Figural Processional Crosses, Dumbarton Oaks Byzantine Collection Publications 10 (Washington, DC, 1994), 8–37.

⁸¹ R. Pierobon-Benoit, "La croce come element decorativo o simbolo cristiano negli oggetti di uso commune in Oriente (secc. I–VIII)," in *La croce: Iconografia e interpretazione (secoli I–inizio XVI)*. *Atti del convegno internazionale di studi, Napoli, 6–11 dicembre 1999*, ed. B. Ulianich, 3 vols. (Naples, 2007), 1:307–74; Zimmermann, "Die spätantike und byzantinische Malerei," 629–31; E. M. Schoolman, "Kreuze und kreuzförmige Darstellungen in der Alltagskultur von Amorium," in *Byzanz: Das Römerreich im Mittelalter* 2.1:372–86; I. Jacobs, "Cross Graffiti as Physical Means to Christianize the Classical City," in *Graphic Signs of Identity, Faith, and Power in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. I. H. Garipzanov, C. Goodson, and H. Maguire, Cursor 27 (Turnhout, 2017), 175–221; J. Crow, "Blessing or Security? Understanding the Christian Symbols of a Monumental Aqueduct Bridge in the Hinterland of Late Antique Constantinople," in *ibid.*, 147–74; S. Pedone, "La fede che incide: Alcuni graffiti inediti nella S. Sofiadi Costantinopoli," in *"Di Bisanzio dirai ciò che è passato, ciò che passa e che sarà": Scritti in onore di Alessandra Guiglia*, ed. S. Pedone and A. Paribeni (Rome, 2018), 217–34; S. Pedone, "Una singolare bottega di lapidisti bizantini attiva a Hierapolis, Efeso e Sardi," *ActaIRNorv* 30 = n. s. 16 (2018): 217–36; A. Pülz, "Selected Evidence of Christian Residents in Late Antique Ephesos," in *Religion in Ephesos Reconsidered*, ed. S. J. Frieser et al., *Novum Testamentum suppl.* 177 (Leiden, 2020), 73–89.

Brickwork: N. Teteriatnikov, "The Hidden Cross-and-Tree Program in the Brickwork of Hagia Sophia," *BSI* 56 (1995): 689–99.

Doors: F. Dirimtekin, "The Bronze Doors of Saint Sophia," *Annual of Ayasofya Museum* 3 (1961): 42–46; C. Barsanti and A. Guiglia Guidobaldi, "Le porte e gli arredi architettonici in bronzo della Santa Sofia di Costantinopoli," in *Le porte del Paradiso: Arte e tecnologia bizantina tra Italia e Mediterraneo 11–12 secolo*, ed. A. Iacobini, *Milion* 7 (Rome, 2009), 81–123.

Over doors: Keil, Knoll, and Reisch, *Die Marienkirche in Ephesos*, 52, fig. 59; A. M. Schneider, *Die Grabung im Westhof der Sophienkirche zu Istanbul*, *IstForsch* 12 (Tübingen, 1941), 15, no. 12, pls. 5, 14.1; E. Laflı and A. Zäh, "Archäologische Forschungen im byzantinischen Hadrianopolis in Paphlagonien," *BZ* 101.2 (2008): 681–713, esp. 687–88, fig. 7, pl. 15; P. Niewöhner, "The Decline and Afterlife of the Roman Entablature: The Collection of the Archaeological Museum Istanbul and Other Byzantine Epistyles and Cornices from Constantinople," *IstMitt* 67 (2017): 237–328, esp. 248–50, figs. 20–22.

Fig. 21.
Brickwork with cross
in the south aisle of
St. John Stoudios in
Istanbul, mid-fifth
century. The projection
of the marble window
frame to the left
confirms that the
brickwork and cross
would have been
hidden behind wall
revetment. Photo
U. Peschlow.



Fig. 22.
Brickwork with cross
in the Cumanın, or
Kesik Minare Camii,
a converted early
Christian church at
Antalya. Photo
author, 2000.



Christian silver plate from Constantinople and St. Sion in Lycia had large and ostentatious crosses, staurograms, and Christograms, and altars as well as reliquaries in Constantinople and Asia Minor were typically decorated with crosses, if they were decorated at all.⁸²

A marble tympanon with a carved cross from an early Byzantine church in Lycia: B. İşler, "Surveys on the Byzantine Settlements around Alacadağ in Lycia," *ANAMED* 14 (2016): 217–25, fig. 5.

City gates: U. Peschlow, "Mauerbau in krisenloser Zeit? Zu spätantiken Stadtbefestigungen im südlichen Kleinasien: Der Fall Side," in *Krise und Kult: Vorderer Orient und Nordafrika von Aurelian bis Iustinian*, ed. D. Kreikenbom, K.-U. Mahler, and T. M. Weber, *Millennium Studies* 28 (Wiesbaden, 2010), 61–108, figs. 4, 32.

Fountains: H. Hörmann, *Die Johanneskirche*, Forschungen in Ephesos 4.3 (Vienna, 1951), 56–58; S. Eyice, "İstanbul Arkeoloji Müzesinde Bizans-Türk Çeşmesi," *Belleten* 39 (1975): 429–46; W. Jobst, "Ein spätantiker Strassenbrunnen in Ephesos," in *Studien zur spätantiken und byzantinischen Kunst: Friedrich Wilhelm Deichmann gewidmet*, 3 vols., ed. O. Feld and U. Peschlow, *Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum Monographien* 10 (Bonn, 1986), 1:47–62; Ş. Yıldırım, "Side Müzesinden Bir Geç Antik Çağ Çeşmesi," *Olba* 23 (2015): 515–34; Pülz, "Selected Evidence," 73–89.

Floors, in churches and elsewhere: e.g., H. Candemir, "Christliche Mosaiken in der nördlichen Euphratesia," in *Studien zur Religion und Kultur Kleinasien: Festschrift für Friedrich Karl Dörner*, ed. S. Şahin, E. Schwertheim, and J. Wagner, *Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'Empire romain* 66 (Leiden, 1978), 192–231, esp. fig. 1, pl. 75.2 (northern ambulatory of a central-plan church at Akdeğirmen Hüyük); F. Tülek, "Kilikya Bölgesi Mozaikleri Araştırması," *Araştırma Sonuçları Toplantısı* 23 (2005): 397–404, esp. 399, 403, fig. 11 (in Yarbaşı); V. Scheibelreiter-Gail, *Die Mosaiken Westkleinasiens*, Österreichisches Archäologisches Institut, Sonderschriften 46 (Vienna, 2011), 378–80 (apses of an early Christian church at Sinyri southeast of Milas in Caria); W. Jobst, "Das Mosaikpaviment der frühchristlichen Basilika von Gönen/Germe in Mysien (Hellespont)," in *Mosaics of Turkey and Parallel Developments in the Rest of the Ancient and Medieval World*, ed. M. Şahin, *International Colloquium on Ancient Mosaics* 11 = Uludağ Üniversitesi Mozaik Araştırmaları Merkezi Yayınları Serisi 1 = Sempozyum Bildirileri 3 (İstanbul, 2011), 483–504; B. Söğüt and F. Aytekin, "Stratonikeia Kuzey Sütunlu Cadde Doğu Portik Mozaïği," in *Barış Salman Anı Kitabı*, ed. I. Adak Adibelli et al. (İstanbul, 2017), 221–32; Y. Albayrak, "Şanlıurfa Kale Eteği Nekropolü 2015–2017 Yılları Kazı ve Temizlik Çalışmaları," *Kazı Sonuçları Toplantısı* 40 (2018): 639–50, esp. 643, 650, fig. 8 (on the floor of a rock-cut hypogeum). Cf. also L. Habas, "Crosses in the Mosaic Floors of Churches in Provincia Arabia and Nearby Territories," *Journal of Mosaic Research* 8 (2015): 33–60, esp. 44–47.

Coins: P. Grierson, *Byzantine Coins* (London, 1982), 34–36; Dinkler and Dinkler-von Schubert, "Kreuz," 42–50; L. Travaini, "La croce sulle monete da Costantino alla fine del Medioevo," in *La croce: Iconografia e interpretazione*, 2:7–40.

⁸² Silver plate: R. E. Leader-Newby, *Silver and Society in Late Antiquity: Functions and Meanings of Silver Plate in the Fourth to Seventh Centuries* (Aldershot, 2004), 85–92.

Early Christian ambos and bishop's thrones had carved crosses (figs. 23 and 24), and monolithic marble baptismal fonts that were common at Constantinople, in central Anatolia, and at St. John of Akalissos in Lycia, were also engraved or inlaid with crosses.⁸³ Late antique press weights with large and prominent crosses are specific to the region and may have indicated church or monastic ownership of oil or wine (fig. 25).⁸⁴

Altars and reliquaries: Peschlow, "Altar und Reliquie"; Niewöhner, *Aizanoi*, nos. 404–7, pl. 47; N. Çorağan Karakaya, "Gereme Panagia Kilisesi," in *Ortaçağ ve Türk Dönemi Kazıları ve Sanat Tarihi Araştırmaları Sempozyumu* 13 = *Pamukkale Üniversitesi Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi Sanat Tarihi Bölümü Yayınları* 1 (Pamukkale, 2010), 175–83, esp. 182, fig. 4; A. Aydın, *Reliquaries of the Sarcophagus Type*, Suna ve İnan Kıraç Akdeniz Medeniyetleri Araştırma Enstitüsü Monografi Dizisi 9 (Antalya, 2011); A. Arslan, "Konya Çevresinde Bulunan Bizans Dönemi Litürkik Elemanlar: Altar ve Altar Tabanları," *Selçuk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 31 (2014): 39–47; G. Koch, in *The Eerdmans Encyclopedia of Early Christian Art and Archaeology*, ed. P. C. Finney (Grand Rapids, MI, 2017), s.v. reliquary: stone (also on other regions, where the decoration is more often figural); S. Ladstätter, "Ein frühchristliches Reliquiar aus Ephesos und sein topographischer Kontext," in *Lebenswelten zwischen Archäologie und Geschichte: Festschrift für Falko Daim zu seinem 65. Geburtstag*, ed. J. Drauschke, E. Kislinger, K. Kührtreiber, T. Kührtreiber, G. Scharrer-Liška, and T. Vida, 2 vols., *Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum Monographien* 150 (Mainz, 2018), 2:749–62. Cf. also what the excavators identified as a waist-high marble offertory box, decorated with a cross medallion, but what may have been an altar with a receptacle for relics, in the church of St. Mary at Ephesus: Keil, Knoll, and Reisch, *Die Marienkirche in Ephesos*, 58–61, figs. 66, 72.

⁸³ Ambos: Niewöhner, *Aizanoi*, 110–11 (bibliography, including Constantinople), 145, 188 (bibliography), no. 320, fig. 118, pl. 34; no. 330, fig. 126, pl. 36; no. 333, pl. 36; no. 410, pl. 48; no. 415, pl. 49; nos. 420, 423, pl. 50; nos. 427–28, pl. 51; no. 484, pl. 62; no. 486, pl. 63.

Thrones: E. Keskin, *Küçük Asya'da Kutsal Kent Euchaïta ve Bizans Dönemi Taş Eserleri* (Ankara, 2015). Cf. another marble cathedra at the Archaeological Museum Konya, inv. 87: H. Tezcan, *Topkapı Sarayı ve Çevresinin Bizans Devri Arkeolojisi* (İstanbul, 1989), 369, fig. 537.

Marble fonts: S. Watta, "Spätantike monolithische Taufpiscinen aus konstantinopolitanischer Produktion," *JbAC* 51 (2008): 152–87, esp. 174–75; M. Taşlıalan, "Excavations at the Church of St. Paul," in *Actes du 1er Congrès international sur Antioche de Pisidie*, ed. idem, T. Drew-Bear, and C. M. Thomas (Lyon, 2002), 9–32, esp. 18, 32, pl. 23; Niewöhner, *Aizanoi*, 189, 261, 284, nos. 334, 429, pls. 37, 51; P. Niewöhner, "The End of the Byzantine City in Anatolia," in *Städte im lateinischen Westen und im griechischen Osten zwischen Spätantike und Früher Neuzeit*, ed. E. Gruber et al. (Vienna, 2016), 63–77, esp. 73–74, fig. 10; Harrison, "Churches and Chapels of Central Lycia," 135, fig. 13, pl. 42a (St. John of Akalissos).

⁸⁴ P. Niewöhner, "The Riddle of the Anatolian Cross Stones: Press Weights for Church or Monastic Estates?," in *Archaeology of*



Fig. 23.
Marble platform of an early
Christian ambo, Archaeological
Museum Çorum in Galatia. The
underside is hollowed out and
carved with a cross. The grooved
right side connected to stairs.
Photo author, 2012.



Fig. 24.
Marble seat with large
crosses in panels and
small crosses on staffs,
Archaeological
Museum Çorum: an
early Christian
bishop's throne?
Photo author, 2012.



Fig. 25. Weight of a late antique lever and screw press for oil or wine, Museum Bolu in Bithynia, inv. 4294; octagonal; on the front a cross, the two flanking sides with vines; the upper side, which has mostly broken off, contains a central hole for the screw. Photo Dosseman; courtesy Wikimedia Commons (CCA 4.0).

While all these monuments provide evidence for the many varied uses of crosses in pre-Iconoclast Constantinople and Asia Minor, the cross mosaics, frescoes, and reliefs described in the previous section of this article are of particular interest because they occupy positions that in other regions of the late antique empire were more often taken up by figures and were at issue during Iconoclasm, when the focus appears to have been on apse images and the sanctuary.

Outside Constantinople and Asia Minor as well as northern Mesopotamia, apses and domes of early Christian churches and chapels were rarely decorated with crosses⁸⁵ but rather representations of Christ and saints.⁸⁶ Tombs, as well as more sophisticated

grave markers, were likewise often decorated with figures, whether on gold glass, in fresco, or as sculpted sarcophagi.⁸⁷ The next section shall address the role that figural representations played in late antique Constantinople and Asia Minor, and how they related to the crosses under consideration thus far.

63–73, repr. in idem, *Urban and Religious Spaces in Late Antiquity and Early Byzantium*, Collected Studies 706 (Aldershot, 2001), 1–29; G. V. Mackie, *Early Christian Chapels in the West* (Toronto, 2003); J.-M. Spieser, “Le décor figuré des édifices ecclésiastiques,” *AntTard* 19 (2011): 95–108; D. Lauritzen, “La mosaïque de l’abside centrale de Saint-Serge à Gaza d’après la description de Chorikios et la basilique Euphrasienne de Poreč,” in *XII Colloquio AIEMA*, ed. G. Trovabene (Paris, 2015), 259–64; Bergmeier, *Visionserwartung* (above, n. 8); C. Croci and V. Ivanovici, eds., *Entre terre et ciel: Les édifices à coupole et leur décor entre l’Antiquité tardive et le Moyen Âge*, Études de Lettres 307 (Lausanne, 2018); Thümmel, *Ikonologie* (above, n. 1), 231–62.

87 J. Dresken-Weiland, *Bild, Wort und Grab: Untersuchungen zu Jenseitsvorstellungen von Christen des 3.–6. Jahrhunderts* (Regensburg, 2010); V. Fugger, “The Meaning of Christian Figural Wall Painting in the Context of Late Antique Burial Chambers,” in *Context and Meaning: Proceedings of the Twelfth International Conference of the Association internationale pour la peinture murale antique*, ed. S. T. A. M. Mols and E. M. Moormann, Babesch suppl. 31 (Leuven, 2017), 69–74.

Gold glass: C. R. Morey, *The Gold-Glass Collection of the Vatican Library with Additional Catalogues of Other Gold-Glass Collections* (Rome, 1959); J. Felsner, “Römische Zwischengoldgläser mit Bildern von Märtyrern und Heiligen,” *Mitteilungen zur Christlichen Archäologie* 20 (2014): 75–90; D. T. Howells, *A Catalogue of the Late Antique Gold Glass in the British Museum* (London, 2015); E. Paneli, “Von der römischen Ikonographie zum Christentum: Die Entwicklung der Ikonographie der römischen Zwischengoldgläser vom 3. bis zum 5. Jahrhundert n. Chr.,” in *Λεπέτυμνος: Μελέτες αρχαιολογίας και τέχνης στη μνήμη του Γεωργίου Γούναρη*, ed. A. Semoglu, I. P. Arbanitidu, and E. Gunare (Thessalonike, 2018), 581–94.

Fresco: *La Roma sotterranea Cristiana* 1–12 (Rome, 1936–2004); E. Marki, *Η νεκρόπολη της Θεσσαλονίκης στους υστερορωμαϊκούς και παλαιοχριστιανικούς χρόνους* (Athens, 2006); P. Bonnekoh, *Die figürlichen Malereien in Thessaloniki vom Ende des 4. bis zum 7. Jahrhundert: Neue Untersuchungen zur erhaltenen Malereiausrüstung zweier Doppelgräber, der Agora und der Demetrios-Kirche*, Nea polis 1 (Oberhausen, 2013); P. Bonnekoh, “The Figurative Wall Paintings in Thessaloniki from the End of the 4th to the 7th Century AD,” in *Antike Malerei zwischen Lokalstil und Zeitstil*, ed. N. Zimmermann, Denkwien 468 = Archäologische Forschungen 23 (Vienna, 2014), 711–16; V. Kuvatova, “Early Christian Funerary Painting in Thessaloniki,” in *Makedonia–Rim–Vizantiia: Iskustvo Severnoi Gretsii ot antichnosti do srednikh vekov / Macedonian–Roman–Byzantine: The Art of Northern Greece from Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, ed. N. A. Nalimova et al., Trudy Istoricheskogo Fakul’teta Mgu 109, Serii II Istoricheskie Issledovaniia 61 (Moscow, 2017), 128–41.

Sarcophagi: Koch, *Frühchristliche Sarkophage; Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage*, ed. F. W. Deichmann (Wiesbaden, 1967–2018).

a World of Changes, ed. D. Moreau et al., BAR International Series 2973 (Oxford, 2020), 327–36.

85 Belting-Ihm, *Die Programme der christlichen Apsismalerei*, 80–83; Brenk, *The Apse, the Image, and the Icon* (above, n. 8), 27–28; Spalding-Stracey, *Cross in the Visual Culture* (above, n. 2), 187–90.

86 Mundell Mango (“Monophysite Church Decoration,” 62–65) lists numerous Near Eastern examples; Belting-Ihm, *Die Programme der christlichen Apsismalerei*; J.-M. Spieser, “The Representation of Christ in the Apses of Early Christian Churches,” *Gesta* 37 (1998):

Crosses and Icons

Three monuments appear to answer the question about the relationship of crosses and figural art in Constantinople and Asia Minor, as their decoration includes both. Although these monuments are not churches, they reflect the tastes of the pious and wealthy. The first is the so-called Prince's Sarcophagus, an early Christian marble sarcophagus now at the Archaeological Museum Istanbul (fig. 26).⁸⁸ Of gray-veined marble from Proconnesus/Marmara Adası, it can be attributed to a Constantinopolitan workshop from the Theodosian period. Angels and other figures appear in secondary positions, subordinate to central Christograms and crosses. The front and back depict flanking angels who present a wreath with a Christogram. Each short side has two flanking apostles that hail a large cross.

Christograms, staurograms, and crosses could be combined, as in a chi-rho cross monogram in a hypogeum at the Silivri Gate of Constantinople, and were often used interchangeably,⁸⁹ for example, in the wreaths with crosses and flanking angels (or personifications of Nike/victory) on the base of Arcadius's column in Constantinople, in the sixth-century mosaics of San Vitale at Ravenna, and on early Byzantine ivories.⁹⁰ However, while these latter crosses may refer to Christian victory, the Christograms on the Prince's Sarcophagus and two other Constantinopolitan sarcophagi with the same iconography⁹¹ appear as aniconic alternatives to busts of Christ with flanking angels, as on a door lintel of Alahan Manastır (fig. 27),⁹² a late antique church complex in Isauria, and on the

upper panel of the consular Barberini Ivory, above Justinian I on horseback.⁹³ In funerary contexts where these symbolic representations were chosen, busts would have been life-size, in central positions, and face to face with stationary observers, that is, in positions that might invite and could receive veneration from the viewer. In contrast, the busts on the door lintel and on the framing ivory panel are smaller and occupy secondary positions above the entering church goer and the riding emperor, where the context implies movement or narration and would be ill-suited to worship.

It may be noted here parenthetically that apse crosses could also be conceptualized as aniconic alternatives to images of Christ. This is most obvious in churches dedicated to aspects of his divine nature, as in Hagia Sophia and Hagia Irene, but may apply more widely, considering that Christ appears to have been the standard early Christian apse image in churches where figural representations were customary.⁹⁴ In some cases, his image directly relates to the cross that stands above and behind him, as in the apse of Santa Pudenziana in Rome; hovers in the heaven opposite him, as in the so-called Mausoleum of Galla Placidia in Ravenna, where it is hailed by apostles as on the Prince's Sarcophagus; or replaces him and carries his bust in an apse image of the Transfiguration, as in San Apollinare in Classe.⁹⁵

bibliography). For the chronology of the complex, see also N. Wetzig, "Alahan Manastır," *Olba* 22 (2014): 393–444.

93 A. Cutler, "Barberiniana: Notes on the Making, Content, and Provenance of Louvre OA. 9063," in *Tesserae: Festschrift für Josef Engemann*, ed. E. Dassmann, *JbAC* suppl. 18 (Münster, 1991), 329–39. The attribution to Justinian follows from similarities to parts of the mid-sixth-century ivory Throne of Maximian at Ravenna, which are so close as to suggest the same workshop. Cf. the consular ivory of Justin (Constantinople, 540), also with a small bust of Christ: Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten*, 41, no. 33, pl. 17.

94 Spieser, "Representation of Christ"; idem, "Le décor figuré des édifices ecclésiastiques."

95 E. Swift and A. Alwis, "The Role of Late Antique Art in Early Christian Worship: A Reconsideration of the Iconography of the 'Starry Sky' in the 'Mausoleum' of Galla Placidia," *PBSR* 78 (2010): 193–217; M. C. Carile, "The Apse Mosaic of St. Pudenziana," in *The Vision of the Palace of the Byzantine Emperors as a Heavenly Jerusalem* (Spoleto, 2012), 209–72; D. Longhi, "The Cosmic Cross as Logos' Theophany: First Version of Sant'Apollinare in Classe's Apsidal Mosaic and Jerusalem's Staurophany of AD 351," *Ikon* 6 (2013): 275–86; Thümmel, *Ikonologie*, 325–28. For more crosses that allude to the transfiguration and appear to stand in for Christ, see Spalding-Stracey, *Cross in the Visual Culture* (above, n. 2), 190.

88 A. Müfit, *Ein Prinzensarkophag aus Istanbul*, Istanbul Asiatika Müzeleri Nesriyatı 10 (Istanbul, 1934); Koch, *Frühchristliche Sarkophage*, 403–4, 424, figs. 111–13; Deckers and Koch, *Repertorium* (above, n. 75), 61–62, no. 88, pls. 30–33.

89 See above, n. 2.

90 G. Berefelt, *A Study on the Winged Angel*, Stockholm Studies in History of Art 14 (Stockholm, 1968), 21–56; W. F. Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten der Spätantike und des Frühen Mittelalters*, Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum. Kataloge vor- und frühgeschichtlicher Altertümer 7, 3rd ed. (Mainz, 1976), nos. 125, 126, 142, 145.

91 Deckers and Koch, *Repertorium*, 62–64, nos. 89, 90, pl. 34. Cf. also a wooden door panel of Sant'Ambrogio at Milan: Berefelt, *Study on the Winged Angel*, 44, fig. 27.

92 M. Gough, *Alahan*, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies. Studies and Texts 73 (Toronto, 1985), 87–91; A. Ricci, "Alahan, di nuovo," *RIASA* 66 = 3rd ser., no. 34 (2011): 37–48 (with earlier

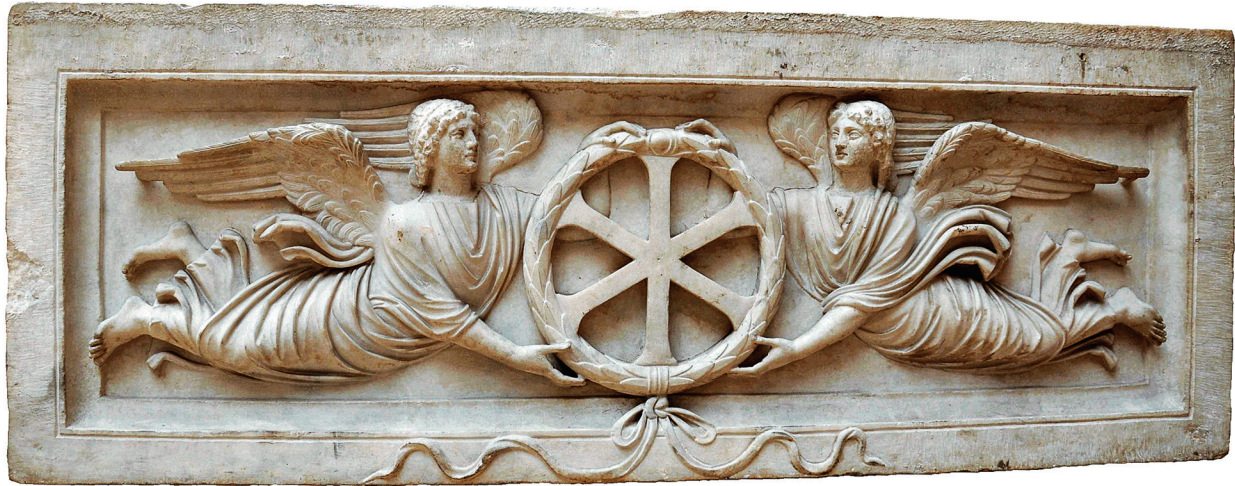


Fig. 26. So-called Prince's Sarcophagus, Istanbul Archaeological Museum 4508 T, gray-veined marble from Proconnesus/Marmara Adası, attributable to a Constantinopolitan workshop from the Theodosian period. On the front, two flying angels present a central wreath with a Christogram. Photo W. Schulz-Wackerbarth.



Fig. 27. Door lintel of the western church at Alahan Manastır in Isauria, limestone, fifth century. A central bust of Christ in a wreath is presented by two flying angels, two more busts occupy flanking positions, and the underside as well as the jambs are also carved with biblical figures. Photo N. Wetzig, 2010.

The second monument to be considered here is a hypogeum at the Silivri Gate in the Theodosian land walls of the capital city.⁹⁶ The tomb appears to have been built in the first quarter of the fifth century, soon after the city walls, and it contains five graves arranged in a Π -shape. The graves are of marble and limestone, and their frontal slabs are decorated in high relief and form a continuous, Π -shaped frieze. Marble is reserved

for the central grave, in an elevated position opposite the entrance, which is decorated with a chi-rho cross monogram inside a wreath. An ordinary cross occupies the center of the first (limestone) grave to the right, where it is flanked by figures of the deceased family, with the parents raising their hands in prayer. On the opposite side, the first (limestone) grave to the left shows Christ lecturing to the apostles. The two remaining (limestone) graves, only partly visible, are decorated with small narrative scenes from the Old Testament. Overall, the decoration appears to be centered on crosses, with additional biblical narratives in

96 J. G. Deckers and Ü. Serdaroğlu, "Das Hypogäum beim Silivri-Kapı in Istanbul," *JbAC* 36 (1993): 140–63; Deckers and Koch, *Repertorium*, nos. 22, 31, 35, 71, figs. 2–18.

secondary positions.⁹⁷ Related grave monuments in Constantinople follow the same pattern, as on a limestone relief with three aediculae: the central one with a curtained screen opens onto a Christogram, and the flanking ones contain figures of the deceased, who lift their hands in prayer.⁹⁸

The third monument is an early Christian altar, also decorated with crosses and figures, from the Turkish village of Pusatlı near Caesarea/Kayseri in Cappadocia.⁹⁹ The massive, round altar stone bears a large cross on top and a Christogram with wreath in front. Smaller, detailed figural scenes occupy the sides and show St. Elijah ascending to heaven in a chariot drawn by four horses, as well as St. Mamas, a local martyr, among wild animals, one of which he is milking. The figural scenes are clearly subordinate to the crosses by size and position. The figures can only be seen up close, by walking around the altar, which means they were visible only to the clergy: lay people were barred from entering the sanctuary. The figural scenes told stories, but they did not invite veneration.

This arrangement appears to echo a statement attributed to St. Nilus (d. 430), a follower of the Constantinopolitan patriarch St. John Chrysostom (399–403) and later bishop of Ancyra/Ankara, but which may go back only to the sixth century, when Nilus's letters

were edited, possibly including spurious material.¹⁰⁰ In letter 61 to Eparch Olympiodorus, Nilus advises that church sanctuaries be decorated with nothing more than the cross, while recommending that the north and south nave walls illustrate biblical narratives, not for worship but to educate the illiterate.¹⁰¹ As the next section shall show, Nilus's statement appears to circumscribe the use of images in late antique Constantinople and Asia Minor.

Icons before Iconoclasm

Icons in the narrow, post-Iconoclast sense of the word—portable paintings with portrait character—are rarely attested for late antique Constantinople and Asia Minor. The few known examples appear to have been exceptional cases that were presented outside the regular liturgy, which distinguishes them from the ordinary figural images in the apses of early Christian churches elsewhere. At Constantinople, *acheiropoietos* icons “not made from human hands,” such as the Camouliana image of Christ that seems to have served as *palladium* or protector of the city during the Avar siege in 626,¹⁰² were conceptualized and worshiped primarily as material relics from biblical times rather than as mere

97 Several other limestone slabs with biblical scenes were found in the same general area along the Theodosian land walls: J. G. Deckers, “Theodosianische Sepulkralplastik in Konstantinopel. 380–450 n. Chr.,” in *Sarcofagi tardoantichi, paleocristiani e altomedievali*, ed. F. Bisconti and H. Brandenburg, Monumenti di antichità Cristiana, ser. 2, no. 18 (Rome, 2004), 35–52; Ş. Karagöz and D. Mohr, “Neue Fragmente sepulkraler Reliefplastik im Archäologischen Museum Istanbul,” *IstMitt* 62 (2012): 323–40; Deckers and Koch, *Repertorium*, 7–8.

98 Deckers and Koch, *Repertorium*, 52–53, no. 71, pl. 25.

99 J. Kollwitz, “Ein Altar im Museum von Kayseri,” in *Festgabe für Alois Fuchs*, ed. W. Tack (Paderborn, 1950), 15–21; M. Restle, *Studien zur frühbyzantinischen Architektur Kappadokiens*, 2 vols., DenkWien 138 = Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für die Tabula Imperii Byzantini 3 (Vienna, 1979), 1:165; 2: figs. 110, 112; N. Lemaigre Dumesnil, “Sculptures figurées d’époque paléochrétienne en Cappadoce: À propos d’un chapiteau historié inédit,” *CahArch* 50 (2002): 41–50, esp. 41–42; B. İşler, M. Kadiroğlu, and N. Peker, “The Iconography of the Scene of Ascension of Elijah in Cappadocian and Tao-Klardjetian Wall Paintings,” in *Angels, Prophets, and Saints in Islamic and Christian Art*, ed. S. Y. Aydın (Istanbul, 2010), 97–122, esp. 100, 114, fig. 3; V. Ruggieri, “An Altar in the Archaeological Museum of Kayseri: St. Mamas and the Prophet Elijah,” *OCP* 84 (2018): 339–56.

100 G. Fatouros, “Neilos von Ankyra,” in *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon* 6 (Herzberg, 1993), cols. 577–79; A. Cameron, “The Authenticity of the Letters of St. Nilus of Ancyra,” *GRBS* 17 (1976): 181–96.

101 *Concilium universale Nicaenum secundum: Concilii actiones IV–V*, 336, lines 3–14. English translation: C. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312–1453: Sources and Documents* (repr. Toronto, 1986), 32–33.

102 The argument is complicated and involves numerous written sources, see E. Kitzinger, “The Cult of Images in the Age before Iconoclasm,” *DOP* 8 (1954): 85–150, 111–112, 114, and passim, repr. in idem, *The Art of Byzantium and the Medieval West: Selected Studies*, ed. W. E. Kleinbauer (Bloomington, 1976), 91–156; A. Cameron, “Images of Authority: Elites and Icons in Late Sixth-Century Byzantium,” *Past and Present* 84 (1979): 3–35, esp. 18–24; M. Meier, *Das andere Zeitalter Justinians*, Hypomnemata 147 (Göttingen, 2003), 532–36, 542–45; Brubaker and Haldon, *A History* (above, n. 4), 55; J. Rist, “Das Bild von Kamuliana und seine Bedeutung für das frühe Byzanz,” in *Das Christusbild*, ed. K. Dietz et al. (Würzburg, 2016), 135–55. For the problematic evidence concerning early Christian icons of Mary in Constantinople and the preeminence of relics, in particular her girdle, see B. V. Pentcheva, *Icons and Power: The Mother of God in Byzantium* (University Park, PA, 2006), 21–26, 42–49; Effenberger, “Marienbilder im Blachernenheiligtum” (above, n. 24).

likenesses.¹⁰³ Already Eusebius seems to have conceded as much, when he dismissed icons but accepted a bronze that was believed to have been donated by the Bleeding Woman after her miraculous healing.¹⁰⁴ The Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon describes rural Galatia, on the central Anatolian high plateau, at the turn of the seventh century, and refers to four (not necessarily portable) icons in churches as well as a monastery, but the buildings were dedicated to different saints than those shown on the icons, and each performs a miracle on behalf of an individual supplicant.¹⁰⁵

Another category of images comprises small flasks for holy substances from early Christian pilgrimage shrines, for example, at Ephesus and at Laodicea in Phrygia.¹⁰⁶ These images identified the potentially healing contents of the flasks, but they did not perform miracles or receive veneration.¹⁰⁷ They may be compared to small images of saints on lead seals, with

which, starting in the seventh century, a dignitary, for example the archbishop Theophilus of Ephesus, could identify himself with his see, in this case represented by an image of St. John.¹⁰⁸

Similarly, the image of Christ on gold coins in the reign of Justinian II (r. 685–695, 705–711) distinguishes the currency, particularly from contemporary Muslim coinage, but does not appear to have had the same importance as images in churches.¹⁰⁹ In fact, the opposite seems to be implied by canon 82 of the Quinisext Council in Trullo, a meeting of Eastern bishops that Justinian II convened in Constantinople in 691/692. The canon decreed that “the figure of the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, Christ our God, should be set forth in images in human form, instead of the ancient lamb; for in this way we apprehend the depth of the humility of the Word of God, and are led to the remembrance of his life in the flesh.”¹¹⁰

Apparently, replacing a minor pictorial detail such as the lamb, which typically appeared as a relatively small figure within a larger iconographic context,¹¹¹

103 G. Vikan, “Icons and Icon Piety in Early Byzantium,” in *Byzantine East, Latin West: Art-Historical Studies in Honor of Kurt Weitzmann*, ed. C. Moss and K. Kiefer (Princeton, 1995), 569–78, repr. in idem, *Sacred Images and Sacred Power in Byzantium* (Aldershot, 2003), chap. 2; H. L. Kessler, “Configuring the Invisible by Copying the Holy Face,” in *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation*, ed. H. Kessler and G. Wolf, Villa Spelman Colloquia 6 (Bologna, 1998), 129–51; I. L. E. Ramelli, “Σινδών–Mandylion–Turin Shroud? The Long Development of the Abgar Legend and the Emergence of the Image of Jesus,” in *Das Christusbild*, ed. K. Dietz et al. (Würzburg, 2016), 499–535.

104 HE 7.18: H.-G. Thümmel, *Die Frühgeschichte der ostkirchlichen Bilderlehre*, Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur 139 (Berlin, 1992), nos. 13–14; Thümmel, *Ikonologie*, 32–33.

105 *Vie de Théodore de Sykéon*, ed. A.-J. Festugière, SubsHag 48 (Brussels 1970), §§8, 13, 39, 108. Hence, P. Brown (“A Dark Age Crisis: Aspects of the Iconoclastic Controversy,” *EHR* 88 [1973]: 1–34) compares early Christian icons with holy men, because they, too, were outsiders from beyond the institutional church.

106 A. Pülz, “Zur Ikonographie der sogenannten Kleinasiatischen Pilgerampullen,” in *Space, Landscapes, and Settlements in Byzantium: Studies in Historical Geography of the Eastern Mediterranean Presented to Johannes Koder*, ed. A. Külzer and M. St. Popović (Vienna, 2017), 265–82; C. Şimşek and B. Yener, “Ampullae with Figural Depictions from Laodikeia of Late Antiquity,” in *The Lykos Valley and Neighbourhood in Late Antiquity*, ed. C. Şimşek and T. Kaçar, *Laodikeia Çalışmaları* 4 (Istanbul, 2018), 217–33.

107 Brubaker and Haldon, *A History*, 58. V. A. Foskolou (“Reading” the Images on Pilgrim Mementoes [Eulogies]: Their Iconography as a Source for the Cult of Saints in the Early Byzantine Period,” in *Für Seelenheil und Lebensglück: Das byzantinische Pilgerwesen und seine Wurzeln*, ed. D. Arianzi and I. Eichner, *Byzanz zwischen Orient und Okzident* 10 [Mainz, 2018], 315–25) reads the detailed iconography

of some flasks and claims that they should reproduce lost devotional icons, but does not explain why this should be so.

108 J. Cotsonis, “‘What Shall We Call You, O Holy Ones?’ (Martyrion Automelon, Plagal 4): Images of Saints and Their Invocations on Byzantine Lead Seals as a Means of Investigating Personal Piety (6th–12th Centuries),” in *Mélanges Catherine Jolivet-Lévy*, ed. B. Pitarakis et al. = *TM* 20.2 (2016): 69–88, esp. 74–76, 87. Cf. also A.-K. Wassiliou-Seibt, “Die sigilliographische Evidenz der Theotokos und ihre Entwicklung bis zum Ende des Ikonoklasmos,” in *Presbeia Theotokou: The Intercessory Role of Mary across Times and Places in Byzantium (4th–9th Century)*, ed. L. M. Peltomaa, A. Külzer, and P. Allen, *Veröffentlichungen zur Byzanzforschung* 39 = *Denk Wien* 481 (Vienna, 2015), 233–42.

109 J. D. Breckenridge, *Numismatic Iconography of Justinian II (685–695, 705–711 AD)*, NNM 144 (New York, 1959); M. Humphreys, “The ‘War of Images’ Revisited: Justinian II’s Coinage Reform and the Caliphate,” *NC* 173 (2013): 229–44.

110 *The Council in Trullo Revisited*, ed. G. Nedungatt and J. M. Featherstone, *Kanonika* 6 (Rome, 1995), 163; *Das Konzil Quinisextum*, trans. H. Ohme, *Fontes Christiani* 82 (Turnhout, 2006), 106–7, 270–73.

111 E.g., the disk presented by St. John the Baptist on the Constantinopolitan ivory throne of bishop Maximian (546–556) at Ravenna: A. Frey and A. Kluge-Pinsker, “The Cathedra of Maximianus in Ravenna,” in *Rome and the Barbarians*, ed. J.-J. Aillagon (Milan, 2008), 408–9; C. Rizzardi, “Massimiano a Ravenna: La cattedra eburnea del Museo Arcivescovile alla luce di nuove ricerche,” in *Deologia e cultura artistica tra Adriatico e Mediterraneo Orientale (IV–X secolo)*, ed. R. Farioli Campanati and C. Rizzardi (Bologna, 2009), 229–43.

was deemed important and worthy of mention in connection with the human nature of Christ. While this confirms the educational role of narrative imagery that had already been acknowledged by the Cappadocian Fathers, it also suggests that monumental images of the kind that became associated with icon veneration during Iconoclasm were still rare. Otherwise, changing the small figure of the lamb would have been a relatively minor point of debate compared to the appearances of these much larger images.¹¹²

Silver medallions of Christ, Mary, archangels, prophets, and apostles on the sixth-century templon of Hagia Sophia, as described by Paul the Silentiary in his famous poem of 562/563,¹¹³ would have labeled the sanctuary the dwelling place of God but presumably not have invited the same kind of veneration as would an icon. To judge by surviving marble epistyles with such medallions from the middle Byzantine period,¹¹⁴ the images would have been relatively small, visible only from close up. Paul enumerates them as material ornaments that completed the elaborate silver decoration of the sanctuary screen rather than as holy icons. Similar carved images of Christ and biblical figures on the late antique limestone door lintel at Alahan Manastır are still in place and thus appear to have caused no objections during Iconoclasm (fig. 27).

Paul the Silentiary also describes a woven altar cloth of Hagia Sophia, the observation of which would have meant trespassing into the sanctuary, as he points out.¹¹⁵ The cloth's four sides depicted the figures of Christ, Peter, and Paul standing under an arched aedicule, and, on the hem, charitable foundations built by Justinian I

and miracles of Jesus.¹¹⁶ The distribution of the scenes on all sides of the altar, the complexity of the iconography, and the amount of detail bring to mind the stone carvings on the round altar at Kayseri in Cappadocia. These images were visible only to the clergy, and the viewing required movement around the altar. Further mention of other cloths with images of the imperial couple, Justinian and Theodora, blessed by Mary and Christ,¹¹⁷ as well as ample references to costly materials and elaborate weaving techniques, suggest that Paul's excursion into the sanctuary had the worldly purpose of praising Justinian I as pious benefactor, not image veneration.

Nine large-scale mosaic medallions that appear to have contained portrait busts are attested for the Small Sekreton of the patriarchate that survives as the room above the southwest staircase of Hagia Sophia.¹¹⁸ It served as a "private" reception room of the patriarch, and the medallions may have contained busts of prominent earlier officeholders. Portrait galleries of bishops are attested for various early Byzantine sees,¹¹⁹ and in the case of Constantinople any selection and most certainly one as small as the one inside the Small Sekreton would have included patriarchs that had become saints. This could explain why the figures inside the medallions were removed and replaced by crosses in 768/9, during Iconoclasm.¹²⁰

In addition, the middle Byzantine *Book of Ceremonies* states that the patriarch and the emperor assembled in the Small Sekreton to worship relics of the

112 Conversely, canon 82 makes immediate, literal sense in a context where large-scale, lifelike portrait icons of Christ did not exist. Thus, additional, other motivation for the canon beyond what is expressly stated in the text, while not excluded, does not seem to be necessary. Cf., with extensive earlier bibliography, M. T. G. Humphreys, *Law, Power, and Imperial Ideology in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–850* (Oxford, 2015), 50–54; C. Samuelson, "Iconography after the Quinisext Council (c. 680–720)" (PhD diss., Cambridge University, 2016), 53–54, 58–63.

113 Lines 682–719. See above, n. 26.

114 J.-P. Sodini, "La sculpture médio-byzantine: Le marbre en ersatz et tel qu'en lui-même," in *Constantinople and Its Hinterland*, ed. G. Dagron and C. Mango, SPBS 3 (Aldershot, 1995), 289–311; M. E. Armağan, "Banaz'da (Uşak İli) Bulunan Deesis Tasvirli Bir Templon Arşitravı," *Ankara Hacettepe Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 34.2 (2017): 33–46.

115 Lines 755–801. See above, n. 26.

116 Cf. the Daniel and St. Peter textiles at Berlin with churches and miracles on the borders: J. Strzygowski, *Orient oder Rom: Beiträge zur Geschichte der spätantiken und frühchristlichen Kunst* (Leipzig, 1901), 91–104.

117 Lines 802–5. See above, n. 26.

118 Mango, *Brazen House* (above, n. 23), 53; R. Cormack and E. J. W. Hawkins, "The Mosaics of St. Sophia at Istanbul: The Rooms above the Southwest Vestibule and Ramp," *DOP* 31 (1977): 175–251.

119 Deichmann, *Ravenna*, 1:123–25; B. Brenk, "Kulturgeschichte versus Stilgeschichte: Von der 'raison d'être' des Bildes im 7. Jh. in Rom," in *Uomo e spazio nell'alto medioevo = Sett 50* (Spoleto, 2003), vol. 2, p. 971–1054; P. Niewöhner, "Vom Sinnbild zum Abbild: Der justinianische Realismus und die Genese der byzantinischen Heiligentypologie," *Millennium* 5 (2008): 163–90, here 169; Cf. L. Sotira, "Le imagines clipeatae nei mosaici parietali di V e VI secolo: Esempi paradigmatici a Ravenna nel contesto mediterraneo," in *Atti del XXI Colloquio dell'Associazione italiana per lo studio e la conservazione del mosaico*, ed. C. Angelelli, D. Massara, and F. Sposito (Rome, 2016), 565–75.

120 See below, n. 150.

True Cross.¹²¹ The onset of this and other religious functions could also have been an incentive to clear the room of any portrait-style images, if only to prevent their “accidental” veneration. Compare the case of icons in low positions that according to the iconoclast emperor Leo V were prone to receive misguided worship.¹²² It should be noted that in late antiquity the Small Sekreton, or “private” reception room, would not have been accessible to the general public. Following an audience with Patriarch Cyriacus (596–606), Theodore of Sykeon (d. 613) descended the “private spiral staircase” and met a supplicant only after exiting the “private door” to the patriarchate,¹²³ presumably in the vestibule described above,¹²⁴ where the decoration was purely aniconic.

In contrast to the portrait busts, a narrative scene from late antique Constantinople survived Iconoclasm, probably because the format did not lend itself to image veneration. Today at the Archaeological Museum Istanbul, the mosaic was discovered on a wall of the early Christian predecessor of Kalenderhane Mosque, the late Byzantine church of Theotokos Kyriotissa, and shows Jesus’s Presentation at the Temple.¹²⁵ The small scene was surely part of a narrative cycle. A single scene of the conversion and baptism of Constantine the Great is reported for the narthex of the early sixth-century church of St. Polyeuktos in Constantinople. That scene is described in a contemporary epigram that survives partly on the marble arcade of the church and has also been transmitted in the Palatine Anthology.¹²⁶ The epigram acclaims Anicia Juliana, an imperial princess, for donating the church, and it praises the building

for its architecture, gilded ceiling, and Constantine’s image in the narthex, suggesting that the church did not contain any other images.¹²⁷ The veneration of Constantine as a saint appears to have begun in the

127 On the gilded ceiling: J. Bardill, “A New Temple for Byzantium: Anicia Juliana, King Solomon, and the Gilded Ceiling of the Church of St. Polyeuktos in Constantinople,” in *Social and Political Life in Late Antiquity*, ed. W. Bowden, A. Gutteridge, and C. Machado, *Late Antique Archaeology* 3 (Leiden, 2006), 339–70; J. Bardill, “Église Saint-Polyeucte à Constantinople: Nouvelle solution pour l’énigme de sa reconstitution,” in *Architecture paléochrétienne*, ed. J.-M. Spieser (Gollion, 2011), 77–103.

Marble busts of Christ, Mary, and the apostles that were found among the debris of St. Polyeuktos appear to have been deposited there in the Ottoman period and were hardly part of the church’s early Christian templon: M. Harrison, *Excavations at Saraḫane in Istanbul I* (Princeton, 1986), 156–57, nos. 19.a.i–x; T. F. Mathews and N. E. Muller, *The Dawn of Christian Art in Panel Paintings and Icons* (Los Angeles, 2016), 173–82. The busts in question were found in Ottoman layers from the sixteenth to nineteenth century inside the substructure of the narthex, where they appear to have been deposited as the church ruin was quarried for building material. Thus, reliefs iii and v came to be buried in layer 725*, which is otherwise noted for thirteenth-century finds, but they overlay Ottoman layers 720–724, 727, and 729. Before their burial, the busts must have been visible until after the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453, when St. Polyeuktos had already been in ruin for centuries, because the heads were defaced in a manner typical of Islamic iconoclasm (cf. the Turkish defacement of archangels on post-Iconoclast column capitals inside the Chora Monastery in Istanbul: Ø. Hjort, “The Sculpture of the Kariye Camii,” *DOP* 33 [1979]: 199–289, here 237–46; also the Turkish mutilation of middle Byzantine saints at Ephesus: Zimmermann, “Die spätantike und byzantinische Malerei” [above, n. 72], 647–56). Peacocks in the carved decoration of the church appear also to have been destroyed (Harrison, *Excavations at Saraḫane*, 117–21, no. 1, figs. 91–110), which is in keeping with Turkish/Muslim vandalism but not with Byzantine Iconoclasm. The origin of the marble busts is unknown. The low quality of the carving sets them apart from the architectural members of St. Polyeuktos as well as from other marble busts at the Archaeological Museum Istanbul that have tentatively been identified as a philosopher and evangelists: N. Firatlı, *La sculpture byzantine figurée au Musée Archéologique d’Istanbul*, Bibliothèque de l’Institut français d’études anatoliennes d’Istanbul 30 (Paris, 1990), 18–20, nos. 35–39, pls. 16–17. The “evangelists” are cradling strangely box-shaped books, which suggests later and possibly post-Iconoclast recarving. For the philosopher, cf. R. R. R. Smith, “Late Roman Philosopher Portraits from Aphrodisias,” *JRS* 80 (1990): 127–55.

Templa with icons, i.e., iconostases, are not attested before the middle Byzantine period: J.-M. Spieser, “Le développement du templon et les images des Douze Fêtes,” in *Les images dans les sociétés médiévales*, ed. J.-M. Sansterre and J.-C. Schmitt = *Bulletin de l’Institut historique Belge de Rome* 69 (1999): 131–64, repr. in idem, *Urban and Religious Spaces in Late Antiquity and Early Byzantium*, *Collected Studies* 706 (Aldershot, 2001); H. G. Thümmel, “Templon und Ikonostas,” in *Logos im Dialogos: Auf der Suche nach der*

121 *Book of Ceremonies* 1.31 (22): Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, *Le livre des cérémonies*, ed. A. Vogt (Paris, 1935–40). According to the same source, the emperor venerated the cross in various places and on numerous occasions; cf. H. G. Thümmel, “Kreuze, Reliquien und Bilder im Zeremonienbuch des Konstantinos Porphyrogenetos,” *ByzF* 18 (1992): 119–26.

122 Iadevaia, *Scriptor incertus*, 62, 337–39; 67, 473–74; Brubaker and Haldon, *History*, 369–70.

123 *Vie de Théodore de Sykéon*, ed. Festugière, §93.

124 Niewöhner and Teteriatnikov, “South Vestibule” (above, n. 31), 151–55.

125 C. L. Striker, *Kalenderhane in Istanbul I* (Mainz, 1997), 121–24, pls. 148–49.

126 C. Mango and I. Ševčenko, “Remains of the Church of St. Polyeuktos at Constantinople,” *DOP* 15 (1961): 243–47; *Anthologia Graeca* 1.10, ed. H. Beckby, 2nd ed. (Berlin, 1965).

sixth century,¹²⁸ but his depiction in St. Polyeuctus was likely motivated by Anicia's Constantinian pedigree.

Narrative scenes were more common in early Christian churches of Asia Minor, as is attested by two Cappadocian Fathers, Gregory of Nyssa (335–340–d. after 394) and Basil of Caesarea (329/330–379). In an oration on Theodore the Martyr, Gregory argues that paintings help to spread knowledge of the martyrs' deeds.¹²⁹ The oration was delivered inside the martyr's church and makes reference to what appears to have been a cycle of narrative paintings illustrating the life of the saint. In a sermon on the Forty Martyrs delivered in a church at Caesarea, Basil of Caesarea likened paintings to written histories, as both could inspire bravery by describing or illustrating heroic deeds.¹³⁰ In both cases, the Church Fathers clearly had narrative scenes, rather than iconic images for veneration, in mind.¹³¹ In the same spirit, Hypatius, an early sixth-century bishop of Ephesus, recognized the instructional value of images while distancing himself from their worship, as he replied to a certain Julian from the city of Adramyttion in the province

of Asia, who was generally critical of images and their use in a Christian context.¹³²

Justinian I's church of St. John at Ephesus used to contain images that are attested by three more epigrams in the Palatine Anthology.¹³³ One showed the emperor and his wife being crowned by St. John,¹³⁴ similar to the kind of donor image on the cloth described by Paul the Silentiary in the sanctuary of Hagia Sophia. Another epigram refers to a donor image of a magister Theodore with the archangel and details that Theodore served twice as *anthypatos*, or proconsul, presumably of Asia, in which case he would have resided in Ephesus.¹³⁵ Theodore's tenure and the donor image likely date from the second half of the sixth century, as the epigram is attributed to a contemporary, Agathias, and the office of proconsul lapsed after the sixth century. Theodore's image is said to have been placed in the narthex, just as the scene of Constantine's conversion and baptism was in the narthex of St. Polyeuctus. A third epigram refers to a scene of Jesus resurrecting Lazarus, and other miracles were likely illustrated alongside it, but as the epigram is not dated, it is not clear whether this scene or cycle pre- or postdates Iconoclasm.¹³⁶

Remains of an early Christian cycle of Jesus's miracles survive in the so-called Grave of St. Luke, also at Ephesus, a crypt that resulted from the conversion of a Roman macellum into an early Christian church of

Orthodoxie. Gedenkschrift für Hermann Goltz, Forum orthodoxe Theologie 11 (Berlin, 2011), 309–21.

128 B. Fourlas, "Ein Komplex frühbyzantinischer Silberobjekte aus einer Kirche des heiligen Konstantin," in *Spätantike und Byzanz: Bestandskatalog Badisches Landesmuseum*, ed. F. Daim et al., Byzanz zwischen Orient und Okzident 8.1 (Mainz, 2017), 145–61.

129 P. Cavaras, "De Sancto Theodoro," in *Gregorii Nysseni Sermones: Pars II*, ed. G. Heil, J. P. Cavaras, and O. Lendle, Gregorii Nysseni Opera 10.1 (Leiden, 1990), 59–71, esp. 62.25–64.4. Cf. G. Lange, *Bild und Wort: Die katechetischen Funktionen des Bildes in der griechischen Theologie des sechsten bis neunten Jahrhunderts*, 2nd ed. (Paderborn, 1999), 32–33.

130 PG 31:509A; "Auf die Heiligen Vierzig Märtyrer," in *Des Heiligen Kirchenlehrers Basilius des Großen Ausgewählte Schriften*, vol. 2, *Ausgewählte Homilien und Predigten*, trans. A. Stegmann, Bibliothek der Kirchenväter 47 (Kempten, 1925), 432–44, esp. 434. Cf. P. J. Fedwick, *Bibliotheca Basiliana Universalis: A Study of the Manuscript Tradition, Translations, and Editions of the Works of Basil of Caesarea*, vol. 2: *The Homiliae morales, Hexameron, De Litteris, with Additional Coverage of the Letters* (Turnhout, 1996), 1111–12.

131 Of which they generally disapproved, see Thümmel, *Die Frühgeschichte der ostkirchlichen Bilderlehre* (above, n. 104), 53–59; C. Bordino, "I padri della chiesa e le immagini" (PhD diss., Università degli studi della Tuscia di Viterbo, 2010), http://dspace.univ.it/bitstream/2067/1027/1/cbordino_tesid.pdf. Cf. also an analogous understanding of Eusebius of Caesarea and his attitudes to Christian imagery: J.-P. Caillet, "Eusèbe de Césarée face aux images," *AntTard* 22 (2014): 137–42.

132 H.-G. Thümmel, "Hypatios von Ephesos und Iulianos von Atramyntion zur Bilderfrage," *BSI* 44 (1983): 161–70. See also Brubaker and Haldon, *A History* (above, n. 4), 44–50, for a summary of a lengthy and inconclusive discussion on whether Hypatius's statement is authentic or a later interpolation. Augustine of Hippo (354–430) and Pope Gregory the Great (590–604) also valued pictures for educational purposes: H. Kessler, "Pictures as Scripture in Fifth-Century Churches," *Studia Artium Orientalis et Occidentalis* 2.1 (1985): 17–31; C. Chazelle, "Pictures, Books, and the Illiterate: Pope Gregory I's Letters to Serenus of Marseilles," *Word and Image* 6 (1990): 138–53.

133 M. Andaloro, "La decorazione pittorica degli edifici cristiani di Efeso: La chiesa di Santa Maria e il complesso di San Giovanni," in *Efeso paleocristiana e bizantina*, ed. R. Pillinger et al., Archäologische Forschungen 3 (Vienna, 1999), 54–70, esp. 55–58. A short and thus potentially misleading summary of Andaloro's analysis: Zimmermann, "Die spätantike und byzantinische Malerei," 633.

134 *Anthologia Graeca* 1.91.

135 *Ibid.*, 1.36. Cf. *PLRE* 3:1261–62, s.v. Theodorus 54.

136 *Anthologia Graeca* 1.50.

unknown dedication.¹³⁷ The northern side room of the cathedral church of St. Mary, also at Ephesus, has fresco remains on its southern wall that have tentatively been identified as the Adoration of the Magi, but the poor state of preservation does not allow for a definite reading or dating.¹³⁸

Early Christian frescoes in a cave sanctuary at Ephesus show narrative scenes like the ascension of St. Elijah, Abraham sacrificing Isaac, and the apocryphal story of Sts. Paul and Thecla.¹³⁹ In addition, a large-scale fresco of Christ seated on a rainbow survives in a central location on the principal cave wall, where it may well have received veneration. This fresco forms the fourth of five layers of wall painting and must therefore date from between the sixth and the eleventh or twelfth centuries, when the third and the fifth layers are believed to have been executed. A post-Iconoclast date seems most likely, not least because there is no indication of any iconoclast interference.



To summarize, the available evidence¹⁴⁰ suggests that icons and image veneration were less common in

137 Zimmermann, “Die spätantike und byzantinische Malerei,” 637–39; A. Pülz, *Das sog. Lukasgrab in Ephesos*, *Forschungen in Ephesos* 4.4 (Vienna, 2010), 104–15.

138 Andaloro, “La decorazione pittorica,” 59–62, figs. 1–10, pls. 31–35; Zimmermann, “Die spätantike und byzantinische Malerei,” 631.

139 R. Pillinger, “Die Paulus-Grotte,” in *Wandmalerei in Ephesos von hellenistischer bis in byzantinische Zeit*, ed. N. Zimmermann and S. Ladstätter (Vienna, 2010), 174–81 (color images of most frescoes); R. J. Pillinger, “Thekla in der Paulusgrotte von Ephesos,” in *Thecla: Paul’s Disciple and Saint in the East and West*, ed. J. W. Barrier et al., *Studies on Early Christian Apocrypha* 12 (Leuven, 2017), 205–18 (latest suggestions concerning the chronology of the frescoes).

140 Not included are various doubtful and ill-attested cases, e.g., a mosaic angel on the west wall and frescoes on the north wall of an early Christian basilica with middle Byzantine graves near Ersincan: B. Can, “Technical, Stylistic, Iconographic Evaluation, and Dating of Mosaics of Altintepe Church,” in *Mosaics of Turkey and Parallel Developments in the Rest of the Ancient and Medieval World*, ed. M. Şahin, *International Colloquium on Ancient Mosaics* 11 = *Uludağ Üniversitesi Mozaik Araştırmaları Merkezi Yayınları Serisi* 1 = *Sempozyum Bildirileri* 3 (Istanbul, 2011), 225–34, esp. 230–33; mosaic fragments of unknown iconography and function from the theater at Hierapolis in Phrygia: E. Neri, “Mosaici bizantini da Hierapolis di Frigia,” in *Archeologia classica e post-classica tra Italia e Mediterraneo: Scritti in ricordo di Maria Pia Rossignani*, ed. S. Lusuardi Siena et al., *Contributi di archeologia* 8 (Milan,

2016), 503–12; alleged marble icons that appear to be ancient funerary reliefs found during excavation of Basilica A next to an ancient necropolis of Andriake in Lycia: N. Öztürk and M. Çekilmez, “2015 Myra-Andriake Liman Yerleşimi A Kilisesi Kazı Çalışmaları,” *Atatürk Üniversitesi Güzel Sanatlar Enstitüsü Dergisi* 36 (2016): 27–46, esp. 31–32, figs. 2–3; more alleged marble icons without nimbs, in ancient style, and, in one case, with the name of Paul that seems to be a later addition, found during excavation of Church 3 at Olympus in Lycia, which also contained frescoes that compare to middle Byzantine frescoes elsewhere in Lycia (see below): B. Y. Olcay Uçkan et al., “Olympos Kazısı 2017 Yılı Çalışmaları,” *Kazı Sonuçları Toplantısı* 40.3 (2018): 617–38, esp. 623, 626–27, 636–37, figs. 5 and 8.

V. Ruggieri and A. Zäh (*Visiting the Byzantine Wall Paintings in Turkey* [Rome, 2016], 21–39 [Lycia], 43–48 [Caria]) ascribe a group of frescoes in Lycia as well as some in Caria to the late antique period, but the reading and dating of the frescoes seems questionable. Problems include what is identified as a Christ Pantokrator-type bust with the right hand raised above shoulder level (rather than held in front of the breast) in the apse of a chapel on Karacaören Island (fig. 2); what Ruggieri identifies as the head of Virgin Mary with corkscrew curls (and no maphorion) on the north wall of the same chapel (figs. 7 and 9); a bust with an accompanying inscription that is understood to identify the depicted as Christ Emmanuel above the north door of Church 2 on Gemile Island (fig. 27, pl. 3); and an allegedly early Christian fresco of a young saint with a curly page-boy hairstyle in a chapel that was built over an early Christian church with mosaic floor at Cavar (fig. 50). All other evidence points to a middle Byzantine date for such chapels that replaced early Christian churches after their collapse during the period of Arab invasions, in the seventh to ninth century: Hild and Hellenkemper, *Lykien und Pamphylien*, 225–27. “Separate images of Christ Emmanuel labelled as such appear with any frequency only from the eleventh century onwards” (N. P. Ševčenko, “Christ: Types of Christ,” *ODB* 1:437–439). The curly page boy as well as the apse figure with raised right hand would seem to fit comfortably within the context of middle Byzantine frescoes elsewhere in Lycia (e.g., S. Doğan et al., *Demre-Myra: Aziz Nikolaos Kilisesi* [Istanbul, 2014]) and on Cyprus (e.g., D. Winfield and J. Winfield, *The Church of the Panaghia tou Arakos at Lagoudhera, Cyprus: The Paintings and Their Painterly Significance*, DOS 37 [Washington, DC, 2003]; L. Hadermann-Misguich, *Le temps des anges: Recueil d’études sur la peinture byzantine du XII^e siècle, ses antécédents, son rayonnement*, ed. B. D’Hainaut-Zveny and C. Vanderheyde [Brussels, 2005]; A. Nicolaides and A. Weyl Carr, eds., *Asinou Across Time: Studies in the Architecture and Murals of the Panagia Phorbiotissa, Cyprus*, DOS 43 [Washington, DC, 2012]), areas that were closely connected and, during the middle Byzantine period, administrated jointly: Hild and Hellenkemper, *Lykien und Pamphylien*, 126. The chapel on Karacaören Island was originally built as a mausoleum and may have been reconfigured as a Christian sanctuary in middle Byzantine times, because a neighboring early Christian basilica had collapsed during the Invasion period: Hild and Hellenkemper, *Lykien und Pamphylien*, 231, 600–1. The alleged Virgin Mary with corkscrew curls is more convincingly identified as an angel by S. Tsuji, ed., *The Survey of Early Byzantine Sites in Ölüdeniz Area* (Osaka, 1995), 91, pl. 8. Cf. H. Özyurt Özcan, “Dağa’da Bir Theotokos Meryam Tasviri,” *Olba* 18 (2010): 371–94.

Constantinople and Asia Minor than in other regions of the late antique empire,¹⁴¹ for example, Rome and the West¹⁴² or parts of the Near East¹⁴³ such as Egypt¹⁴⁴ and the Monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai.¹⁴⁵ The few icons that are attested in Constantinople and Asia Minor were wonder-working or *acheiropoietos* relics, that is, they had additional qualities apart from depicting Christ or saints that justified their presentation, which took place outside the regular liturgy.¹⁴⁶ Other images on door lintels, ivories, pilgrims' flasks, coins, the silver revetment of Hagia Sophia's templon, altars, altar cloths,

and other liturgical textiles do not appear to have been intended for worship.

Likewise, historical images of emperors and narrative scenes illustrating the lives of biblical figures and martyrs are variously attested for early Christian churches in Constantinople and Asia Minor, where they also survived Iconoclasm. These narrative images occupied secondary positions and were presumably considered educational. As they did not invite veneration, they were not at stake during Iconoclasm.

The iconoclast Council of Hieria (754) and other sources, in particular sermons of the iconophile John of Damascus (675/676–749), appear to have been concerned mainly with apse images and the sanctuary.¹⁴⁷ A post-Iconoclast miracle story describes the church of the Virgin Chalkoprateia in the center of Constantinople as decorated with Christological murals, but blames Constantine V only for removing the apse image (and replacing it with a cross), as the narrative cycle appears to have remained in place.¹⁴⁸ Although the story was likely invented to tarnish the emperor's image, it seems to confirm that Iconoclasm was focused on apse images and unconcerned with narrative scenes. In fact, the combination of a cross in the apse and narrative scenes elsewhere is in keeping with what is known from other early Christian churches in Constantinople and Asia Minor. The later attribution of the cross to an iconoclast intervention may echo the inscriptions in the apse of Hagia Sophia and on the Chalke Gate.

In the room above the southwest ramp of Hagia Sophia, medallions with images that probably had

141 Which is not to say that those other regions were homogenous in their various usages of, and attitudes to, figural images; see B. Brenk, "Apse, Icons, and 'Image Propaganda' before Iconoclasm," *AntTard* 19 (2011): 109–30; idem, "Le prime icone affrescate," in *Itinerari mediterranei fra IV e IX secolo*, ed. B. Astrua (Turin, 2013), 186–206; idem, "Early Frescoed Icons: A Case of Cultural Divergence between East and West," in *Byzantine Culture*, ed. D. Sakel, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, ser. 8, no. 12 (Ankara, 2014), 83–92.

142 R. Markus, "The Cult of Icons in Sixth-Century Gaul," *JTS*, n.s. 29 (1978): 151–57, repr. in idem, *From Augustine to Gregory the Great*, Collected Studies 169 (London, 1983), chap. 12; Pentcheva, *Icons and Power* (above, n. 102), 21–26, on the discrepancy between Rome and Constantinople; P. J. Nordhagen, "In Praise of Archaeology: Icons before Iconoclasm," *JÖB* 60 (2010): 101–13; Brenk, "Early Frescoed Icons"; G. Fingarova, "Mary as Intercessor in the Decoration of the Chapel in Durrës, Albania," in *Presbeia Theotokou: The Intercessory Role of Mary across Times and Places in Byzantium (4th–9th Century)*, ed. L. M. Peltomaa, A. Külzer, and P. Allen, Veröffentlichungen zur Byzanzforschung 39 = DenkWien 481 (Vienna, 2015), 203–18; H. Maguire, "What Is an Intercessory Image of the Virgin? The Evidence from the West," *ibid.*, 219–32; F. Dell'Acqua, *Iconophilia: Politics, Religion, Preaching, and the Use of Images in Rome, c. 680–880*, Birmingham Byzantine and Ottoman Studies 27 (London, 2020).

143 T. Avner, "Early Byzantine Wall-Paintings from Caesarea," in *Caesarea Papers 2*, ed. K. G. Holum, A. Raban, and J. Patrich, *JRA* suppl. 35 (Portsmouth, RI, 1999), 108–28.

144 A. Effenberger, "Maria als Vermittlerin und Fürbitterin: Zum Marienbild in der spätantiken und frühbyzantinischen Kunst Ägyptens," in *Presbeia Theotokou*, 49–108; Mathews and Muller, *Dawn of Christian Art*.

145 K. Weitzmann, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai: The Icons*, vol. 1: *From the Sixth to the Tenth Century* (Princeton, 1976); T. F. Mathews, "Early Icons of the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai," in *Holy Image, Hallowed Ground: Icons from Sinai*, ed. R. S. Nelson and K. M. Collins (Los Angeles, 2006), 39–55; K. A. Corrigan, "Visualizing the Divine: An Early Byzantine Icon of the 'Ancient of Days' at Mount Sinai," in *Approaching the Holy Mountain: Art and Liturgy at St. Catherine's Monastery in the Sinai*, ed. S. E. Gerstel and R. Nelson, *Cursus mundi* 11 (Turnhout, 2010), 285–304.

146 Brubaker and Haldon, *A History*, 35–39, with more examples.

147 T. Krannich, C. Schubert, and C. Sode, *Die ikonoklastische Synode von Hieria 754: Einleitung, Text, Übersetzung und Kommentar ihres Horos*, Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum 15 (Tübingen, 2002), 56–59, 85, n. 132; Johannes von Damaskos, *Die Schriften*, vol. 1: *Institutio elementaris*, ed. B. Kotter (Berlin, 1969), 17.15–16; 20.8–9; concerning later changes to the text, see also *Concilium universale Nicaenum secundum: Concilii actiones IV–V*, x. Interpretation: P. Speck, *Artabasdos, der rechthgläubige Vorkämpfer der göttlichen Lehre*, *Poikila Byzantina* 2 (Bonn, 1981), 195–97, 280–81; idem, "Anthologia Palatina I, 1 und das Apsismosaik der Hagia Sophia," in *Varia* 2, *Poikila Byzantina* 6 (Bonn, 1987), 285–329, esp. 287–90; idem, *Ich bin's nicht, Kaiser Konstantin ist es gewesen: Die Legende vom Einfluß des Teufels, des Juden und des Moslem auf den Ikonoklasmus*, *Poikila Byzantina* 10 (Bonn, 1990), 697–700.

148 W. Lackner, "Ein byzantinisches Marienmirakel," *Byzantina* 13 (1985): 833–60; C. Mango, "The Chalkoprateia Annunciation and the Pre-Eternal Logos," *Δελτ. Χριστ. Αρχ. Έτ.*, ser. 4, no. 17 (1993/94): 165–70; Brubaker and Haldon, *A History*, 206–7.

portrait character, and likely depicted earlier patriarchs and saints, were removed and replaced by crosses during Iconoclasm, although they occupied the relative privacy of the Small Sekreton, which, in its vestibule, maintained an aniconic outward appearance in keeping with the early Christian churches of the capital.

This tantalizingly vague evidence leads to the question of whether early Christian churches in Constantinople and Asia Minor lacked the kind of iconic images that occupied (apse) domes in other regions of the empire, for example, those in Rome, Milan, Ravenna, Thessalonike, Egypt, and St. Catherine on Mount Sinai.¹⁴⁹ Instead, the early Christian apses of Constantinople and Asia Minor could all have been decorated with crosses, as in the surviving cases presented above. Alternatively, figural apse images could have been erased during Iconoclasm and replaced by crosses, as the iconophile sources would have it. The next section of this article shall investigate whether crosses may have been put up to replace figural apse images in the period of Iconoclasm.

Crosses during Iconoclasm

Whether or not crosses replaced figural images requires each of the two Iconoclast episodes—that of the eighth and that of the ninth century—to be considered separately. In the first, the substitution of crosses for figures is attested for the Small Sekreton of the patriarchate, the room above the southwest ramp of Hagia Sophia at Constantinople, where patriarch Niketas I reportedly obliterated all images in 768/9.¹⁵⁰

149 H. Brandenburg, *Die frühchristlichen Kirchen in Rom*, 3rd ed. (Regensburg, 2013); G. Mackie, "Symbolism and Purpose in an Early Christian Martyr Chapel: The Case of San Vittore in Ciel d'Oro, Milan," *Gesta* 34 (1995): 91–101; Deichmann, *Ravenna*; J. Dresken-Weiland, *Die frühchristlichen Mosaiken von Ravenna* (Regensburg, 2016); J. Clédat, *Le monastère et la nécropole de Baouît*, Mémoires de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire 12, nos. 1, 2, 39 (Cairo, 1904, 1906, 1916); Belting-Ihm, *Die Programme der christlichen Apsismalerei*, 198–209; E. Bolman, *The Red Monastery Church* (New Haven, 2016); G. H. Forsyth and K. Weitzmann, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai: The Church and Fortress of Justinian* (Ann Arbor, 1973), 11–18; A. Andreopoulos, "The Mosaic of the Transfiguration in St. Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai," *Byzantion* 72 (2002): 9–37.

150 Theophanes, *Chronographia*, 1:443 (Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, 611); Nikephoros, *Historia syntomos (Breviarium)* (ed. C. de Boor [Leipzig, 1880], 76) = Nikephoros, Patriarch of Constantinople, *Short*

The same has been assumed for the cross in the apse mosaic of Hagia Irene on the northern side of Hagia Sophia. The new apse mosaic was part of a renovation that had become necessary after the collapse of the early Christian church, probably following an earthquake in 740.¹⁵¹ The renovation used to be ascribed to the iconoclast emperor Constantine V, because of the cross in the apse and an aniconic fresco decoration in the north aisle that also includes cross medallions (fig. 28).¹⁵² However, more recent dendrochronological analysis provides a terminus post quem of 796±19 for the renovation.¹⁵³ Given this new date range, the iconophile Irene, not Constantine V, is the most likely patron of the renovation, particularly as she shared the name of the church. Thus, a monogram on a marble slab inside may not be that of Constantine V¹⁵⁴ but of Irene's son Constantine VI (r. 780–797), on behalf of whom Irene ruled until 790.

The case for Irene is strengthened by comparison with the church of St. Sophia at Thessalonike that was rebuilt by Irene, Constantine, and Theophilus, who are named in the mosaics of the sanctuary vault. They are probably to be identified with Irene, Constantine VI, and the same bishop Theophilus that participated in

History 86.1–9 (ed. C. Mango, CFHB 13 = DOT 10 [Washington, DC, 1990], 160–63); commentary: Cormack and Hawkins, "Mosaics of St. Sophia at Istanbul" (above, n. 118), 210–11; Brubaker and Haldon, *A History*, 201–3.

151 U. Peschlow, *Die Irenenkirche in Istanbul*, *IstMitt* suppl. 18 (Tübingen, 1977); U. Peschlow, "Die Baugeschichte der Irenenkirche in Istanbul neu betrachtet," in *Architectural Studies in Memory of Richard Krautheimer*, ed. C. L. Striker (Mainz, 1996), 133–36.

152 R. Ousterhout, "The Architecture of Iconoclasm," in Brubaker and Haldon, *Sources* (above, n. 11), 3–20, esp. 5–8; Brubaker and Haldon, *A History*, 212–14; L. James, *Mosaics in the Medieval World* (Cambridge, 2017), 271–72. Cf. R. Ousterhout, "Problems of Architectural Typology during the Transitional Period (7th to Early 9th Century)," in *Transforming Sacred Spaces*, ed. S. Feist, Spätantike–Frühes Christentum–Byzanz, ser. B, no. 48 (Wiesbaden, 2019), 147–60.

153 P. I. Kuniholm, "Of Harbors and Trees: The Marmaray Contribution to a 2367-Year Oak-Tree-Ring Chronology from 97 Sites for the Aegean, Eastern Mediterranean, and Black Seas," in *Istanbul and Water*, ed. P. Magdalino and N. Ergin, *Ancient Near Eastern Studies*, suppl. 47 (Leuven, 2015), 47–90, esp. 59–60, no. 41.

154 T. Ulbert, "Untersuchungen zu den byzantinischen Reliefplatten des 6. bis 8. Jahrhunderts," *IstMitt* 19/20 (1969/70): 338–57, esp. 349–50.



Fig. 28. Fresco with cross medallions in the north aisle of Hagia Irene at Istanbul, after 796±19.
Photo: W. Schiele, 1969, D-DAI-IST-RD00003.

the seventh ecumenical council.¹⁵⁵ The mosaics were originally similar to those of Hagia Irene insofar as they did not include figures but rather a large cross in the semidome of the apse and numerous smaller crosses in the vault of the bema. Later, after Iconoclasm, the apse cross was replaced by a figure of the Virgin seated with the Christ child on her lap.¹⁵⁶ Did Irene, known as a supporter of icon veneration and convener of the iconophile seventh ecumenical council, sponsor iconoclast church decoration in the early years of her reign, as has been suggested in the case of St. Sophia at Thessalonike?¹⁵⁷

Doubts arise from the various early Christian apse crosses enumerated above. Why and how should the apse crosses of Hagia Irene and St. Sophia at Thessalonike have been understood as iconoclast symbols, if they had always been a common, if not the default, option in Constantinople and Asia Minor? The same doubts apply to the aniconic frescoes with cross medallions in the north aisle of Hagia Irene (fig. 28) that may well be compared to the similarly aniconic early Christian vault mosaics with crosses in the aisles (figs. 1–3) and in the narthex of Hagia Sophia, and in the vestibule of the patriarchate (figs. 4 and 5).

As to St. Sophia at Thessalonike, further doubts arise from the fact that the church appears to have been built and decorated in imitation of Hagia Sophia (fig. 29).¹⁵⁸ The imitation may have been partly inspired by the shared dedication and because both served as

cathedrals of their respective cities.¹⁵⁹ However, apart from some significant deviations that may have liturgical explanations,¹⁶⁰ both the architecture and the decoration of St. Sophia copied that of Hagia Sophia, including the exceptional two narthexes, the outer one of which has since collapsed and disappeared.¹⁶¹ Such imitation had a long tradition in Byzantine architecture and interior decoration,¹⁶² as in the vestibule of the patriarchate at Constantinople (figs. 4 and 5) that imitated the plan and decoration of the neighboring narthex of Hagia Sophia, or the triconch church of St. Sion in Lycia (fig. 6) that copied the layout and the apse crosses of St. John at Akalissos (fig. 7). In the case of St. Sophia, the imitation of Hagia Sophia might also account for the cross mosaic in the apse, if a cross did, in fact, precede the mosaic of the Virgin in the apse of Hagia Sophia, and this would further obscure any other, iconoclast significance of the symbol.

During the second Iconoclast episode in the ninth century, when the cross was substituted for figural representations, the early Christian associations of the symbol would be overshadowed by iconoclast connotations (see below), but such is not yet in evidence for eighth-century churches. At Hagia Irene, remains of early Christian vault mosaics in the narthex are in keeping with aniconic decoration like that of Hagia Sophia.¹⁶³ The eighth-century crosses in the apse domes of Hagia Irene and St. Sophia appear to continue an early Christian tradition of Constantinople and Asia Minor, and there is neither need nor ground

155 See above, n. 15. Alternatively, G. Velenis and A. Mentzos consider the possibility that the mosaic inscription should be identified with Constantine V and his first wife Irene/Tzitzak, which would date the church to between 741 and 751: A. Mentzos, “Ο γλυπτός διάκοσμος της Αγίας Σοφίας στη Θεσσαλονίκη,” in *Αφιέρωμα στη μνήμη του Σωτήρη Κίτσα* (Thessalonike, 2001), 315–34; G. M. Velenis, “Η χρονολόγηση του ναού της Αγίας Σοφίας μέσα από τα επιγραφικά δεδομένα,” *Θεσσαλονικέων Πόλις* 13 (2004): 72–81; A. Mentzos, “Santa Sofia di Salonicco: Il problema della prima fase,” in *Ideologia e cultura artistica tra Adriatico e Mediterraneo orientale (IV–X secolo)*, ed. R. Farioli Campanati et al., Studi e scavi nuova, ser. 19 (Bologna, 2009), 87–98.

156 See above, n. 15.

157 Cormack, “Apse Mosaics of S. Sophia, Thessaloniki” (above, n. 15), 123; James, *Mosaics*, 275–76.

158 The analogies with Hagia Sophia and Constantinople include the masonry of alternating layers of limestone and brick as well as the polygonal outer shape of the apse, neither of which had been customary in early Christian Thessaloniki: Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans* (above, n. 59), 258–59.

159 For St. Sophia, see A. Stauridou Zafra, “Η Αγία Σοφία ως μητροπολιτικός ναός και το επισκοπείο,” in *Αφιέρωμα στη μνήμη του Σωτήρη Κίτσα* (Thessalonike, 2001), 549–60; Mavropoulou-Tsioumi, “Hagia Sophia,” 244–47.

160 Cf. J. Darrouzès, “Sainte-Sophie de Thessalonique d’après un rituel,” *REB* 34 (1976): 45–78; M. Rautman, “Patrons and Buildings in Late Byzantine Thessaloniki,” *JÖB* 39 (1989): 295–315, esp. 313, fig. 13.

161 The outer narthex of St. Sophia was a remnant of the early Christian predecessor and integrated into the eighth-century rebuilding, until it collapsed sometime after the eleventh century: K. Theoharidou, *The Architecture of Hagia Sophia, Thessaloniki*, BAR International Series 399 (Oxford, 1988), 64–68, 76–78.

162 H. Buchwald, “Imitation in Byzantine Architecture: An Outline,” in *Lithostroton: Studien zur byzantinischen Kunst und Geschichte. Festschrift für Marcell Restle*, ed. B. Borkopp and T. Steppan (Stuttgart, 2000), 39–54.

163 Niewöhner and Teteriatnikov, “South Vestibule” (above, n. 31), 139, figs. 37–38.



Fig. 29. St. Sophia at Thessalonike, vaulting of the nave and the bema (on the right), looking northeast, second half of the eighth century. Photo author, 2014.

for an iconoclast interpretation.¹⁶⁴ Irene may well have been behind the rebuilding and aniconic decoration of Hagia Irene as well as St. Sophia. If, as it seems, the early Christian churches of Constantinople were generally not decorated with iconic images until the eighth century, their adornment would not have been at issue during the first episode of Iconoclasm, and Irene may thus have had no call to discontinue their traditional, aniconic decoration, although she favored icons in other contexts, namely, on the Chalke Gate and at the seventh ecumenical council.

164 Instead, the cross may have remained a symbol of Christian (and imperial) victory throughout the eighth century until the second Iconoclast episode in the ninth century: J. Moorhead, "Iconoclasm, the Cross, and the Imperial Image," *Byzantion* 55 (1985): 165–79.

Crosses at churches in Thessalonike other than St. Sophia likely date from, and were related to, Iconoclasm, as they do not seem to imitate the examples at Constantinople in the same way as St. Sophia does and because early Christian churches of Thessalonike are known for figural representations, including but not limited to apse and dome images of Christ.¹⁶⁵ The

165 L. S. Nasrallah, "Early Christian Interpretation in Image and Word: Canon, Sacred Text, and the Mosaic of Moni Latomou," in *From Roman to Early Christian Thessalonike*, ed. idem (Cambridge, MA, 2010), 361–96; A. Mentzos, *Τα ψηφιδωτά της ανοικοδόμησης του ναού του Αγίου Δημητρίου στον 7ο αιώνα μ. Χ.* (Thessalonike, 2010); *Mosaics of Thessaloniki*, ed. C. Bakirtzis (Athens, 2012), 51–195 (Rotunda, St. Demetrius, Moni Latomou); Fourlas, *Die Mosaiken der Acheiropoietos-Basilika in Thessaloniki*, 110–55 (St. Demetrius), 156–95 (Rotunda); N. K. Moutsopoulos, *Η Ροτόντα του Αγίου Γεωργίου στη Θεσσαλονίκη* (Thessalonike, 2013); B. Kiilerich and H. Torp, *The Rotunda in Thessaloniki and Its Mosaics* (Athens, 2017); *The Mosaics of Thessaloniki Revisited*, ed. A. Eastmond and M. Hatzaki (Athens,

eschewal of such images at Thessalonike would therefore seem to require an explanation, and in lieu of any Constantinopolitan relation (as in the case of St. Sophia), aniconic church decoration may be linked to an Iconoclast prohibition of figural representations, particularly if independent evidence dates the particular monuments to the period of Iconoclasm. Examples include a church and what appears to have been a funerary chapel that were both discovered during archaeological excavations in Thessalonike.¹⁶⁶ The stratigraphy below the chapel establishes a terminus post quem in the seventh century and thus supports a date in the eighth or the ninth century, possibly during Iconoclasm, that is, either between the iconoclast Council of Hieria in 754 and the iconophile Council of Nicaea in 787, or between the iconoclast synod of 815 and the iconophile synod of 843. Both sanctuaries

2018), including chapters on the Rotunda (H. Torp, B. Kiilerich, and M. Hatzaki), the Moni Latomou (L. Nasrallah), and St. Demetrius (C. Bakirtzis).

Cf. the case of Naxos, where figural apse images from late antiquity likewise lead to the conclusion that other aniconic frescoes with crosses should date from the period of Iconoclasm, in particular at Panagia Protothroni, where the cross frescoes replaced and covered an apse image of Christ: M. Acheimastou-Potamianou, “Νέος ανεικονικός διάκοσμος εκκλησίας στη Νάξο: Οι τοιχογραφίες του Αγίου Ιωάννη του Θεολόγου στ’ Αδισαρού,” *Δελτ. Χριστ. Αρχ. Έπ.*, ser. 4, no. 12 (1984): 329–82; Lafontaine-Dosogne, “Pour une problématique de la peinture d’église byzantine à l’époque iconoclaste,” 333–35; M. Panayotidi, “Iconoclasm,” in *Heaven and Earth: Art of Byzantium from Greek Collections*, ed. A. Drandaki et al. (Athens, 2013), 98–101, esp. 100 (bibliography); C. Pennas, “Reassessing the Non-Iconic Decoration in the Byzantine Cyclades,” in *L’iconisme* (above, n. 16), 171–74. However, also note that on Cyprus both figural and aniconic church decoration may have existed simultaneously (for which see below, n. 232), and that some crosses as well as entirely aniconic church decoration elsewhere in Greece date from after Iconoclasm: D. I. Pallas, “Eine anikonische lineare Wanddekoration auf der Insel Ikaria,” *JÖB* 23 (1974): 271–314; D. I. Pallas, “Les décorations aniconiques des églises dans les îles de l’archipel,” in *Studien zur spätantiken und byzantinischen Kunst: Friedrich Wilhelm Deichmann gewidmet*, ed. O. Feld and U. Peschlow, 3 vols., Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum Monographien 10 (Bonn, 1986), 2:171–79; A. Karagianni, *Ο σταυρός στη βυζαντινή μνημειακή ζωγραφική*, Byzantine Texts and Studies 55 (Thessalonike, 2010); Panayotidi, “Iconoclasm,” 100 (bibliography).

166 D. Evangelidis (“Εικονομαχικά μνημεία εν Θεσσαλονίκη,” *Αρχ. Έπ.* [1937]: 341–51) reports the excavation of one church; Makropoulou and Tzitzibassi, “Σωστική ανασκαφική έρευνα στην οδό Κασσάνδρου 90,” 363, drawing 3, on what appears to have been a funerary chapel.

have similar cross frescoes in their apses that seem to be original and did not replace figural representations.

As to the figures in the Small Sekreton—possibly a gallery of previous officeholders, some or all of them saints—and their replacement by crosses in 768/9, this small “private” reception room and what went on therein would appear to have been a different matter, separate from the decoration of churches. To judge from the available evidence, the first episode of Iconoclasm may thus have been concerned mainly with objects of “private” or individual worship (e.g., the four icons mentioned in the Life of Theodore of Sykeon), and not with monumental apse mosaics, which were rare if not nonexistent in pre-Iconoclast Constantinople and Asia Minor.

The situation had changed by the ninth century, when the second Iconoclast episode began in the reign of Leo V (r. 813–820) and two monumental images of Christ and of the Virgin were replaced by crosses. The image of Christ had been affixed to the Chalke Gate in Constantinople, and the Virgin had been depicted in the apse dome of the Church of the Dormition at Nicaea/Iznik in western Asia Minor. Both images were restored after the end of Iconoclasm, and this process of substitution and restoration appears to have been the blueprint for other alleged restorations of images, for example, in the apse domes of Hagia Sophia and St. Sophia, although these crosses may not have been iconoclast replacements. Instead, the iconoclast significance of the cross may have originated in the ninth-century substitutions during the second episode of Iconoclasm.

However, in cases where iconoclasts did substitute crosses for figures, they could rightfully argue that they had restored a status quo ante, because the images in question were not pre-Iconoclast but had been put up during the reign of Irene, and her image of Christ on the Chalke Gate had itself been substituted for an earlier cross. Hence, in a letter written in 824 to the Roman emperor Louis the Pious (r. 813–840), the iconoclast Byzantine emperors Michael II (r. 820–829) and Theophilos (r. 829–842) blame their predecessor Irene for having banned crosses from churches and for replacing them with icons.¹⁶⁷ Therefore, to do justice to both

167 MGH LL, vol. 3, Concilia 2, Concilia aevi Karolini I (Hanover, 1908; repr. 1979), 2:477–78. Translation: Mango, *Art of the Byzantine Empire* (above, n. 101), 157–58. Cf. V. Baranov,

the iconophile/post-Iconoclast point of view, according to which crosses replaced figures, and to the iconoclast perspective, in which figures displaced crosses, the following section shall consider how these and other images contributed to the Iconoclast controversy.

Icons during Iconoclasm

The most important icon and key monument of the Iconoclast controversy was undoubtedly that of Christ on the Chalke Gate. It was the only large and monumental icon known to have been on permanent public display in a key location in Constantinople before the end of Iconoclasm; it was replaced by a cross during the second Iconoclast episode; and it was restored by empress Theodora in 843, immediately after the end of Iconoclasm. The report of how Leo V had the icon taken down mentions an inscription, according to which the image had been installed by Irene to reinstate an earlier tradition that had been disrupted by Leo III. As has been noted, the latter appears unlikely, given the iconophile patriarch Germanos's laudatory mention of an image of the cross that Leo III and Constantine V had put up "in front of the palace," probably on the Chalke. This original cross was accompanied by figures of prophets and apostles, which calls to mind the early Christian Prince's Sarcophagus, which had a similar iconography on its short sides. In the later Byzantine period, the post-Iconoclast image of Christ on the Chalke Gate became widely known as Christos Chalkites and was often described and reproduced as a full-length standing figure.¹⁶⁸

The image of Christ that Irene had displayed on the Chalke appears to be depicted on the Trier Ivory¹⁶⁹ as a large bust (figs. 30 and 31). The ivory was

likely looted from Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade and could have been part of a casket for relics that Irene restored to the church of St. Euphemia at the Hippodrome of Constantinople in 796.¹⁷⁰

However the ivory was originally used, its complex iconography makes for a showpiece of iconophile propaganda: Irene's restoration of St. Euphemia's relics was celebrated with a procession that is known from an eyewitness account in Theophanes' *Chronographia*, among other sources,¹⁷¹ and which appears to be depicted on the Trier Ivory (fig. 30).¹⁷² As on countless earlier such occasions,¹⁷³ the relics were paraded on a horse-drawn carriage, where two clerics can be seen

A. Cutler and P. Niewöhner, "Towards a History of Byzantine Ivory Carving from the Late Sixth to the Late Ninth Century," in *Mélanges Catherine Jolivet-Lévy*, ed. B. Pitarakis et al. = *TM* 20.2 (2016): 89–108, esp. 93–98.

170 Constantine, the contemporary(?) (*PmbZ* 1, 2, 549–50, s.v. Konstantinos 3878) bishop of Tios reports the reinauguration of St. Euphemia, mentions a new reliquary, and describes it as a small casket: F. Halkin, *Euphémie de Chalcedoine: Légendes byzantines*, SubsHag 41 (Brussels, 1965), 103–4.

171 Theophanes, *Chronographia*, 1:439–40 (Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, 607–8). On the composite character of the chronicle, see most recently W. Brandes, "Byzantinischer Bilderstreit, das Papsttum und die Pippinsche Schenkung," in *Menschen, Bilder, Sprache, Dinge: Wege der Kommunikation zwischen Byzanz und dem Westen*, ed. F. Daim et al., Byzanz zwischen Orient und Okzident 9 (Mainz, 2018), 2:63–79. See also *Patria Konstantinupoleos* 3.9: *Scriptores originum Constantinopolitanarum*, vol. 2, ed. T. Preger (Leipzig, 1907), 216–17; English translation: A. Berger, *Accounts of Medieval Constantinople: The Patria* (Cambridge, MA, 2013), 143; Halkin, *Euphémie de Chalcedoine*, 97–99.

172 Alternatively to the understanding presented here, the ivory used to be read not as a realistic depiction of an historic event, but as a generic and possibly entirely fictitious scene: see most recently and with extensive earlier literature, P. Chatterjee, "Iconoclasm's Legacy: Interpreting the Trier Ivory," *ArtB* 100.3 (2018): 28–47.

173 According to Theophanes, the inauguration of St. Irene at Sykai/Galata on the outskirts of Constantinople in 551/552 followed the same pattern: the relics arrived in procession from Hagia Sophia, and two high-ranking clerics, in this case the patriarchs of Constantinople and Alexandria, held them on their knees while riding in the imperial carriage: Theophanes, *Chronographia*, 1:228 (Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, 333). The *Chronicon Paschale* relates the same for the fifth-century arrival of the relics of Patriarch Joseph and of Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist; the last part of the journey from the harbor to Hagia Sophia was again performed by two high-ranking clerics in a carriage, the patriarch, and another bishop: *Chronicon Paschale*, ed. L. A. Dindorf = CSHB 16–17 (Bonn, 1832), 572–73. Cf. J. Wortley, "Relics and the Great Church," *BZ* 99 (2006): 631–47, 633, repr. in idem, *Studies on the Cult of Relics in Byzantium up to 1204* (Ashgate, 2009), chap. 16. For more examples, see K. G.

"Constructing the Underground Community: The Letters of Theodore the Stoudite and the Letter of Emperors Michael II and Theophilos to Louis the Pious," in *Patrologia Pacifica Secunda*, ed. V. Baranov, K. Demura, and B. Lourié, *Scrinium* 6 (Piscataway, NJ, 2010), 230–59.

168 Mango, *Brazen House* (above, n. 23), 135–42.

169 R. Delbrueck, *Die Consulardiptychen u. verwandte Denkmäler*, Studien zur spätantiken Kunstgeschichte 2 (Berlin, 1929), 261–70, no. 67; D. Angelova in *The Erdmans Encyclopedia of Early Christian Art and Archaeology*, ed. P. C. Finney (Grand Rapids, MI, 2017), s.v. relic, translation of; P. Niewöhner, "Historisch-topographische Überlegungen zum Trierer Prozessionselfenbein, dem Christusbild an der Chalke, Kaiserin Irenes Triumph im Bilderstreit und der Euphemiakirche am Hippodrom," *Millennium* 11 (2014): 261–88;



Fig. 30. Trier Ivory, showing Irene's relic procession to St. Euphemia (right) at the Hippodrome (background) in 796, including the Chalke Gate with a bust of Christ (background left). Photo Ann Muenchow; courtesy Hohe Domkirche Trier-Domschatz.



Fig. 31. Detail of the Trier Ivory showing the Chalke Gate with the bust of Christ. Photo author, 2013.

holding the casket on their laps (fig. 31). Irene and her son Constantine VI,¹⁷⁴ who is known to have taken part in the event¹⁷⁵ and—exceptionally in the period—was depicted clean-shaven also on coins,¹⁷⁶ lead the procession into the church that Irene had renovated,¹⁷⁷ as can be seen by tilers still at work on the roof. The new roof replaced a dome that may have collapsed as a result of the earthquake that also destroyed Hagia Irene, probably in 740.¹⁷⁸

The ivory appears to depict three sides of the hexagonal church: to the left, the west side with the main entrance;¹⁷⁹ in the middle, the southwest side with an old entrance that dates back to a late antique palace and reception hall, from which the early Christian church had originally been converted,¹⁸⁰ and that had since become low owing to an elevated Byzantine floor level

and threshold;¹⁸¹ and to the right, the southeast side, to which a central-plan mausoleum with arcosolia, high windows, and a dome was attached in late antiquity.¹⁸² The tall, three-storied façade behind the church—that is, to the east—must be the Hippodrome.¹⁸³ The Chalke is visible to the left of the Hippodrome, because it was a tall building¹⁸⁴ and the viewpoint of the ivory

Holum and G. Vikan, “The Trier Ivory, Adventus Ceremonial, and the Relics of St. Stephen,” *DOP* 33 (1979): 115–33, esp. 118–19.

174 Both the empress and the emperor are shown wearing the chlamys, an ancient military and court cloak that was still prescribed for most processions in the tenth-century *Book of Ceremonies*: E. Piltz, “Middle Byzantine Court Costume,” in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. H. Maguire (Washington, DC, 1997), 39–51, esp. 42. On coins, they were shown in the more regal loros, the standard dress of later Byzantine emperors: K. Kotsis, “Defining Female Authority in Eighth-Century Byzantium: The Numismatic Images of the Empress Irene (797–802),” *JLA* 5 (2012): 185–215.

175 Theophanes, *Chronographia*, 1:439–40 (Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, 607–8).

176 *DOC* 3, 1:337–39; L. Brubaker, *Inventing Byzantine Iconoclasm* (London, 2012), 77–78.

177 As is also attested by Theophanes as well as the other sources: see n. 171.

178 The dome does not appear to have been rebuilt. The excavators only recorded fragments of large brick arches that used to span the lateral niches: H. Belting and R. Naumann, *Die Euphemia-Kirche am Hippodrom zu Istanbul und ihre Fresken*, *IstForsch* 25 (Berlin, 1966), pl. 4a. Debris of the sort that would result from a fallen dome was not in evidence. The (earthquake) damage that led to the collapse of the original dome may have made the substructure too weak to carry a new one.

179 *Ibid.*, 45–46.

180 *Ibid.*, 13–23, 34–44; A. Berger, “Die Reliquien der heiligen Euphemia und ihre erste Translation nach Konstantinopel,” *Hellenika* 39 (1988): 311–22; J. Bardill, “The Palace of Lausus and Nearby Monuments in Constantinople,” *AJA* 101 (1997): 67–95; H. Goldfus, “St. Euphemia’s Church by the Hippodrome of Constantinople within the Broader Context of Early 7th-Century History and Architecture,” *Ancient West and East* 5 (2006): 178–98.

181 Belting and Naumann, *Die Euphemia-Kirche am Hippodrom*, 45–47.

182 *Ibid.*, 50. The mausoleum is one of four that were attached to the northeastern side of the church. Such mausolea were common in late antiquity but not the middle Byzantine period. They were typically attached to martyria for burial *ad sanctos*. The mausolea confirm that the palace was converted into a church with relics already in late antiquity, ahead of Irene’s renovation in 796. This point seems to have been missed by C. Mango and A. Effenberger, who cast the early Christian origin of St. Euphemia into doubt and suggest that Irene was the first to establish the church inside the former palace, although Theophanes, Constantine of Tios, and the Patria agree that Irene renovated a preexisting church: C. Mango, “The Relics of St. Euphemia and the Synaxarion of Constantinople,” in *Studi in onore di mgr Paul Canart*, ed. S. Lucca and L. Perria = *BollGrott* 53 (1999): 79–87; A. Effenberger, “Stadtinterne Reliquientranslationen in Konstantinopel: Der Fall der heiligen Euphemia von Chalkedon,” in *Hinter den Mauern und auf dem offenen Land: Leben im byzantinischen Reich*, ed. F. Daim and J. Drauschke, *Byzanz zwischen Orient und Okzident* 3 (Mainz, 2016), 45–54.

183 The colonnade on the first floor is attested for the sphendone, the curving southern end of the Hippodrome: J. Bardill, “The Architecture and Archaeology of the Hippodrome in Constantinople,” in *Hippodrome: A Stage for Istanbul’s History*, ed. B. Pitarakis, Pera Museum Publications 39 (Istanbul, 2010), 91–148. According to the Trier Ivory, the colonnade continued all along the west side of the Hippodrome. The second floor of the Hippodrome has previously been reconstructed with another, freestanding colonnade, which looks improbable and dangerously unstable, considering the many earthquakes at Constantinople; this unlikely reconstruction appears to be corrected by the Trier Ivory, which shows the second floor with an arcade behind the heads of the spectators. The round, disk-shaped forms between the arches on the ground floor of the ivory Hippodrome were common in (late) Roman Asia Minor, e.g., the monolithic arches of a Theodosian colonnade along a street at Thyatira/Akhisar and other such arches at Cyzicus, at Ankara, as well as at the marble quarries of Proconnesus that also supplied the building material for the Hippodrome: R. Duyuran, “Akhisar Tepe Mezarlığında Yapılan Arkeolojik Araştırmalar 2,” *TürkArkDerg* 20.2 (1973): 17–27; N. Asgari, “The Proconnesian Production of Architectural Elements in Late Antiquity,” in *Constantinople and Its Hinterland*, ed. G. Dagron and C. Mango, Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies 3 (Aldershot, 1995), 263–88, esp. 285–87, fig. 23; N. Koçhan, *Kyzikos Tarihi ve Mimari Kalıntıları* (Bursa, 2011), 136–39, figs. 66–68; Peschlow, *Ankara*, 90, pls. 48–49.

184 Mango, *Brazen House*, 73–107; A. Berger, *Untersuchungen zu den Patria Konstantinopoleos*, *Poikila Byzantina* 8 (Bonn, 1988),

to the west of St. Euphemia appears to be on the Mese, the main street that exists today under its Ottoman name Divan Yollu and follows the ridge of a hill roughly ten meters above the level of the Chalke Gate.¹⁸⁵

242–52; I. Zervou Tognazzi, “Propilei e Chalké, ingresso principale del Palazzo di Costantinopoli,” in *Bisanzio e l’Occidente: Arte, archeologia, storia. Studi in onore di Fernada de’ Maffei* (Rome, 1996), 33–59. The monumental façade of the Chalke with symmetrically arranged columns and niches as depicted on the ivory has been excavated: Ç. Girgin, “La porte monumentale trouvée dans les fouilles près de l’ancienne prison de Sultanahmet,” *Anatolia antiqua* 16 (2008): 259–90; A. Denker, “The Great Palace,” in *Byzantine Palaces in Istanbul*, ed. G. Baran Çelik et al. (Istanbul, 2011), 11–69, esp. 16–17.

185 Thus, the towering Chalke Gate would have been visible above any lower buildings and porticos in the area between the Augustaeum and the Hippodrome, for which see Mango, *Brazen House*, 42–47; F. A. Bauer, *Stadt, Platz und Denkmal in der Spätantike* (Mainz, 1996), 148–67. The Baths of Zeuxippos may once have obstructed the view from St. Euphemia to the Chalke Gate, but bathing is last attested in 713: Theophanes, *Chronographia*, 1:383 (Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, 533); S. G. Bassett, “Sculpture and Tradition in the Baths of Zeuxippos,” *AJA* 100 (1996): 491–506, esp. 492–94. In the eighth century the building was known to have housed a silk workshop and a prison, and later also a monastery, which suggests that the large bathing complex was subdivided into smaller units: Mango, *Brazen House*, 37–42; R. Guiland, “Études sur la topographie de Byzance: Les Thermes de Zeuxippe,” *JÖB* 15 (1966): 261–71; W. Müller-Wiener, *Bildlexikon zur Topographie Istanbuls* (Tübingen, 1977), 51; A. Berger, *Das Bad in der byzantinischen Zeit*, *MiscByzMonac* 27 (Munich, 1982), 145–48. The largest and tallest rooms that were least suitable for other purposes and most difficult to maintain likely collapsed first.

The church of St. John Diipion seems to have been outside the line of sight from the church of St. Euphemia to the Chalke Gate, i.e., to the north or left of the scene on the Trier Ivory. The roof of St. John overlooked the Milion and the church of Alexius at the Augustaeum, as is known from a shooting that took place there in the twelfth century: *Nicetae Choniatae Historia*, ed. I. A. van Dieten, CFHB 11 (Berlin, 1975), 236; N. Asutay-Effenberger and A. Effenberger, “Zur Kirche auf einem Kupferstich von Gugas Inciciyan und zum Standort der Chalke-Kirche,” *BZ* 97 (2004): 51–94, esp. 71. Hartmann Schedel represents St. John as a central-plan building with two stories, and a similarly complex central-plan building that corresponds well with contemporary descriptions of St. John is placed to the southwest of Hagia Sophia on the Istanbul panorama of Matrakçı Nasuh and in the Freshfield Album: J. Bardill and A. Berger, “The Representations of Constantinople in Hartmann Schedel’s World Chronicle, and Related Pictures,” *BMGS* 22 (1998): 2–37, esp. 18–19. Asutay-Effenberger and Effenberger (“Zur Kirche auf einem Kupferstich von Gugas Inciciyan,” 69–72) call this identification of St. John into doubt, but the illustrations do not show any other large and centrally planned building between Hagia Sophia and the Hippodrome, and there can be no doubt that St. John was such a building: P. Magdalino, “The Byzantine Antecedents of the Round Church at Preslav,” *Art Studies Quarterly* 45.2 (2012): 3–5.

It made sense to combine the Chalke and St. Euphemia in one picture, because Leo III, who had allegedly substituted a cross for an original icon on the Chalke, was also blamed for the disrepair of the church of St. Euphemia that he or his son Constantine V had supposedly robbed of relics and desecrated.¹⁸⁶ These latter accusations were almost certainly an invention, because iconoclasts are not otherwise known to have abused relics.¹⁸⁷ However, the accusations made Irene’s restoration of St. Euphemia in 796 look like another victory over iconoclasm, following the establishment of icon veneration at the Council of Nicaea in 787 and her erection of the icon of Christ on the Chalke Gate presumably thereafter and, according to the evidence of the Trier Ivory, before the restoration of St. Euphemia in 796.¹⁸⁸ These actions appear to have strengthened Irene’s Orthodox credentials and imperial authority, and eventually led to her sanctification.¹⁸⁹

The late antique palace building that used to flank St. Euphemia to the north and once obstructed the view did not survive into the eighth century. The enormous vaults appear to have caused problems already during late antiquity, when they were strengthened with additional brick and greenstone piers. Collapse seems to have been inevitable, however, and the building was transformed into one of the city’s numerous large, open-air cisterns: R. Naumann, “Vorbericht über die Ausgrabungen zwischen Mese und Antiochus-Palast 1964 in Istanbul,” *IstMitt* 15 (1965): 135–48; Bardill, “The Palace of Lausus.” The low retaining wall of the cistern was later partly overbuilt by mausoleum MIII, which flanks St. Euphemia to the northeast and provides an early terminus ante quem, as such mausoleums were common during late antiquity but not thereafter: Belting and Naumann, *Die Euphemia-Kirche am Hippodrom*, 49–53.

186 Theophanes, *Chronographia*, 1:439–40 (Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, 607–8); Halkin, *Euphémie de Chalcédoine*, 88–89; cf. C. Mango, “Review of Halkin, *Euphémie de Chalcédoine*,” *JTS* 17 (1966): 485–88; “Patria Konstantinupoleos III 9,” in *Scriptores originum Constantinopolitanarum* 2, ed. T. Preger (Leipzig, 1907), 216–17; English translation: Berger, *Accounts of Medieval Constantinople*, 143; commentary: J. Herrin, *Women in Purple: Rulers of Medieval Byzantium* (Princeton, 2001), 105.

187 J. Wortley, “Iconoclasm and Leipsanoclasm: Leo III, Constantine V, and the Relics,” *ByzF* 8 (1982): 253–79, repr. in idem, *Studies on the Cult of Relics*, chap. 7; Brubaker and Haldon, *A History* (above, n. 4), 38–40; M. Humphreys, “Images of Authority? Imperial Patronage of Icons from Justinian II to Leo III,” in *An Age of Saints? Power, Conflict, and Dissent in Early Medieval Christianity*, ed. P. Sarris, M. Dal Santo, and P. Booth (Leiden, 2011), 150–68, esp. 151–53.

188 Earlier scholarship had advocated a later date during Irene’s sole rule (797–802): Mango, *Brazen House*, 122; Auzépy, “La destruction de l’icône du Christ de la Chalcé,” 455.

189 Brubaker and Haldon, *A History*, 260–76. For further elaboration on the link between Irene’s orthodoxy and her claim to power,

Considering this commitment to the cause of icon veneration, it seems remarkable that Irene was not also depicted or reported to have established icons in churches in Constantinople. The icon of Christ on the Chalke was a different matter, as the palace gate was primarily an imperial monument under her direct control.¹⁹⁰ Irene's chosen iconophile patriarch, Tarasius (784–806), who was instrumental in her iconophile achievements, in particular the council of 787, apparently had churches and a monastery on the Bosphorus illustrated with narrative scenes of the lives of martyrs and biblical events.¹⁹¹ The post-Iconoclast *Life of Tarasius*, by his disciple Ignatius the Deacon, however, suggests that the scenes were for educational purposes rather than for veneration, and thus adhered to early Christian, pre-Iconoclast conventions, as outlined earlier in this article.¹⁹² The iconophile abbot Theodore the Stoudite (759–826) wrote epigrams that appear to describe such pictures in the monastery (church?) of St. John of Stoudios in Constantinople in the late eighth century.¹⁹³

Portable icons are seldom mentioned, as in late antiquity, but the same iconophile abbot Theodore the Stoudite praises a certain patrician Leo for donating an

icon of Christ,¹⁹⁴ and the iconoclast emperor Leo V took issue with icons in low positions, where they were prone to veneration by misguided worshipers.¹⁹⁵

Overall, the impression is of little or no engagement with icons and their veneration among the clergy and probably also the populace of eighth-century Constantinople,¹⁹⁶ a scenario supported by events surrounding the organization of the seventh ecumenical council. Originally convened in Constantinople in 786, the council was soon broken up by iconoclast bishops and soldiers.¹⁹⁷ Opposition to its iconophile agenda was apparently so strong that proceedings had to be postponed until 787, and the council could only be resumed once the venue was moved to the provincial city of Nicaea/Iznik in western Asia Minor.

Nicaea appears to have been partial to images of saints and other holy figures, as evidenced by the Church of the Dormition, which has a figural apse mosaic dating to before the council meeting in 787. The figure was later replaced by a cross, apparently during the second Iconoclast episode. At the end of Iconoclasm, the cross was replaced by a Virgin and Child. In 1922, following the Greek invasion of, and subsequent expulsion from, Asia Minor, the church was razed. The various phases of the church can be reconstructed from old photographs.¹⁹⁸ A *suppedaneum* under the feet of the post-Iconoclast Virgin has been identified as part of the original mosaic and attests to the existence of a figure.¹⁹⁹ This is confirmed by archangels in the vault of the bema in front of the apse, which

see W. T. Treadgold, *The Byzantine Revival, 780–842* (Stanford, 1988), 63–65, 75–89, 120–25; M. Whitrow, "Motherhood and Power in Early Medieval Europe, West and East: The Strange Case of the Empress Eirene," in *Motherhood, Religion, and Society in Medieval Europe, 400–1400: Essays Presented to Henrietta Leyser*, ed. C. Leyser and L. Smith (Farnham, 2011), 55–84, esp. 81; Kotsis, "Defining Female Authority in Eighth-Century Byzantium," 211–12.

190 Mango, *Brazen House*, 21–35.

191 V. Ruggieri, *Byzantine Religious Architecture (582–867)*, OCA 237 (Rome, 1991), 202–3. On Tarasius's special relation to Irene, see Brubaker and Haldon, *A History*, 264–65.

192 *The Life of the Patriarch Tarasios by Ignatios the Deacon*, ed. S. Efthymiadis, BBOM 4 (Aldershot, 1998), 135–42, 194–97 (translation), §§49–52; W. Wolska-Conus, "Un programme iconographique du patriarche Tarasios?," *REB* 38 (1980): 247–54; C. Walter, "An Iconographic Note," *REB* 38 (1980): 255–60; Brubaker and Haldon, *A History*, 314–16.

193 P. Speck, "Ein Heiligenbildzyklus im Studios-Kloster um das Jahr 800," in *Actes du 12e Congrès international d'études byzantines* 3 (Belgrade, 1964), 333–44; idem, *Theodoros Studites: Jamben auf verschiedene Gegenstände*, Supplementa Byzantina 1 (Berlin, 1968), 211–39. In addition, the Roman *Liber Pontificalis* lists "Byzantine" silks with Christological scenes during this period, and some such silks appear to survive at the Vatican: Brubaker and Haldon, *Sources* (above, n. 11), 82–108; idem, *A History*, 337–47.

194 Speck, *Theodoros Studites*, 249–50 (epigram 93).

195 Iadevaia, *Scriptor incertus*, 62, 337–39; 67, 473–74; Brubaker and Haldon, *A History*, 369–70.

196 Ibid., 94–105, 135–40, 790–91.

197 C. Ludwig and T. Pratsch, "Tarasios (784–806)," in *Die Patriarchen der ikonoklastischen Zeit: Germanos I.–Methodios I. (715–847)*, ed. R.-J. Lilie, Berliner Byzantinische Studien 5 (Frankfurt, 1999), 57–108, esp. 77–80; Thümmel, *Die Konzilien* (above, n. 24), 118–20; Brubaker and Haldon, *A History*, 269–73.

198 See above, n. 14.

199 M.-F. Auzépy calls Underwood's observations into doubt, but fails to account for the *suppedaneum*: Auzépy, "La signification religieuse de l'aniconisme byzantine" (above, n. 16), 15–24; M.-F. Auzépy, "Liturgie et art sous les Isauriens: À propos de la Dormition de Nicée," in *Le saint, le moine et le paysan: Mélanges d'histoire byzantine offerts à Michel Kaplan*, ed. O. Delouis, S. Métivier, and P. Pagès, Byzantina Sorbonensia 29 (Paris, 2016), 29–57. While the Virgin was commonly depicted with a *suppedaneum*, this is (to my knowledge) not attested for a cross, which—although only an

date from after the end of Iconoclasm. The labara they hold form part of the original mosaic and must once have belonged to an earlier group of archangels.

The inscriptions in the mosaic are also original. They name a certain Hyakinthos, who is also mentioned in inscriptions on a marble door lintel, capitals, and a slab of the monastery church and appears to have been its founding abbot.²⁰⁰ A different “abbot Gregory of the Monastery of Hyakinthos” is attested as having participated in the council of 787 (and supporting icon veneration), which has been taken to imply that Hyakinthos lived before 787.²⁰¹ The church and its figural apse mosaic should therefore also date before 787. The architecture and Hyakinthos’s inscriptions are in keeping with an eighth-century date,²⁰² likely after 740, as Theophanes reports that a severe earthquake destroyed all but one of Nicaea’s churches in that year.²⁰³



The planning and execution of figural apse and bema mosaics took time. Even replacing them with a cross must have required considerable organization and funds, as professional mosaicists needed to be found and hired, scaffolding erected, the altar and the service relocated, and other accommodations made. Given these circumstances, and the small number of attested figural images and their replacements with crosses,

argument *ex silentio*—cannot be passed over, considering the overwhelming number of crosses without a suppedaneum.

200 E. Weigand, “Zur Monogrammschrift der Theotokos-(Koimesis-)Kirche von Nicaea,” *Byzantion* 6 (1931): 411–20; C. A. Mango, “Notes d’épigraphie et d’archéologie: Constantinople, Nicée,” *TM* 12 (1994): 343–58, esp. 350–53; C. Barsanti, “The Iznik-Nicaea’s Archaeological Museum,” in *Iznik throughout History*, ed. I. Akbaygil, O. Aslanapa, and H. İnalcık (Istanbul, 2003), 267–300, esp. 278–79, figs. 41–42; U. Peschlow, “Nicaea,” in *Archaeology of Byzantine Anatolia* (above, n. 65), 203–16, esp. 210, fig. 15.6.

201 *Concilium universale Nicaenum secundum: Concilii actiones I–III*, 220; *PmbZ* 1, 2, 74, s.v. Gregorios 2431; H. Grégoire, “Encore le monastère d’Hyacinthe à Nicée,” *Byzantion* 5 (1930): 287–93.

202 Architecture: Ousterhout, “The Architecture of Iconoclasm,” 10–11. Inscriptions: see nn. 200, 201.

203 Theophanes, *Chronographia*, 1:412 (Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, 572). If Theophanes’s count is accurate, the only surviving church was the one that housed the first ecumenical council (325) inside the imperial palace: C. Mango, “The Meeting-Place of the First Ecumenical Council and the Church of the Holy Fathers at Nicaea,” *Δελτ. Χριστ. Αρχ. Έτ.*, ser. 4, no. 26 (2005): 27–34, esp. 32–33.

most of the Iconoclast controversy should probably be conceptualized as a slow process of small steps that would have attracted little attention, rarely boiling over into a heated public or semi-public dispute as on the occasion of the first attempt to host the seventh ecumenical council in 786. This appears to be confirmed by the end of Iconoclasm and what happened afterward.

The end of Iconoclasm is identified with the iconophile synod of 843 and Empress Theodora’s restoration of an image of Christ above the Chalke Gate. After this date, no such images were replaced by crosses. However, the reverse process of replacing crosses by figures and establishing images as standard for the apse and as the main focus of the church continued for generations.

Crosses after Iconoclasm

The iconophile synod of 843 and Empress Theodora’s restoration of an image of Christ above the Chalke Gate that year once again turned the tide of the Iconoclast controversy, this time for good. Figural representations were eventually established as the standard decoration for the apse and dome, and became the focal points of most church buildings, even in Constantinople and Asia Minor,²⁰⁴ where crosses had traditionally been the main decoration. This change took time, however, and it was never completed. Some earlier apse crosses remained on display and others were newly painted, as provincial churches continued to be decorated along pre-Iconoclast traditions.

In Constantinople, the new figural apse image of Hagia Sophia from 867 and its accompanying inscription express iconophile sentiment by (perhaps misleadingly) claiming to restore an earlier, pre-Iconoclast tradition. In contrast, the neighboring Hagia Irene, originally the cathedral and still the second most-important church of the Byzantine capital, was allowed to retain its aniconic decoration with crosses in its apse and north aisle (fig. 28). This may have been helped by the iconophile empress and later Orthodox saint Irene’s sponsorship of these crosses, which would have avoided

204 Jolivet-Lévy, *Les églises byzantines de Cappadoce* (above, n. 43); Zimmermann, “Die spätantike und byzantinische Malerei in Ephesos” (above, n. 72); Ruggieri and Zäh, *Visiting the Byzantine Wall Paintings in Turkey* (above, n. 140); Ousterhout, *Visualizing Community* (above, n. 40), 208–17.

any iconoclast connotations. However, inside the imperial palace, where ceiling crosses are attested ever since it was first built by Constantine the Great,²⁰⁵ new ceiling mosaics of Basil I (r. 867–886) still showed the emperor and his family venerating a central cross rather than an image of Christ.²⁰⁶ Such does not appear to have been considered problematic, unless the crosses were known (or believed) to have replaced figural images during Iconoclasm, as in the case of the Chalke and Hagia Sophia.

The same reasoning applies to the Church of the Dormition and why its iconoclast apse cross was replaced with a figure. It was hardly coincidental that the iconography of the Virgin with the Christ child on her lap in the semidome of the apse and accompanying archangels in the vault of the bema is closely comparable to Hagia Sophia, where those figures are depicted in the same locations. In the Church of the Dormition, this iconography is older than in Hagia Sophia and goes back to the original, eighth-century mosaics, as is attested by the original suppedaneum in the apse and the original labara in the bema. Thus, Nicaea may have set the example for Constantinople. The post-Iconoclast restoration of the figural apse and bema mosaics in the Church of the Dormition can explain how the narrative may have arisen that the new mosaics of Hagia Sophia also restored an old tradition, namely, that a cross or other aniconic image in the apse at Constantinople had replaced an original figure in an act of iconoclasm as it had at Nicaea. This supports an early date for the otherwise undated restoration in the Church of the Dormition, soon after the end of Iconoclasm in 843 and before the new mosaics of Hagia Sophia in 867.²⁰⁷

A third instance of the same iconography, the Virgin with the Christ child in the apse of St. Sophia at Thessalonike,²⁰⁸ was likely inspired by the

aforementioned examples, in particular that of Hagia Sophia, which was the model for St. Sophia's original architecture and decoration.

Other provincial apse crosses are not known to have been replaced and seemingly remained on display.²⁰⁹ It would have taken time for new church buildings with figural apse images to outweigh the aniconic tradition of Asia Minor. This is best attested for the cave churches of Cappadocia.²¹⁰ The continued use of earlier churches that focused on large carved crosses is demonstrated through the later supplementation of figural frescoes (fig. 10).²¹¹ In addition, many middle Byzantine cave churches followed the earlier tradition, with a fresco decoration of large central crosses and surrounding figures (figs. 32 and 33).²¹² Some of these crosses occupy the semidome of the apse²¹³ and others

"Hagia Sophia," 290–93; B. Fourlas and V. Tsamakda, "Review of *Mosaics of Thessaloniki*, ed. Bakirtzis," *Βυζαντινά Συμμεικτα* 23 (2013): 361–76, esp. 370–73; Cormack, "After Iconoclasm," 102–6.

209 Including outside Constantinople and Asia Minor. For some such examples, see A. Vassilakes, "Εικονομαχικές εκκλησίες στη Νάξο," *Δελτ. Χριστ. Αρχ. Έτ.*, ser. 4, no. 3 (1962/63): 49–74; Teteriatnikov, *Mosaics of Hagia Sophia* (above, n. 20), 282–86.

210 M. Restle, *Die byzantinischen Wandmalereien in Kleinasien* (Recklinghausen, 1967); Wharton Epstein, "The 'Iconoclast' Churches of Cappadocia," 105; N. Thierry, "La croix en Cappadoce," in *Le site monastique copte des Kellia*, ed. P. Bridel (Genève, 1986), 197–212; A. Karagianni, "Représentations des croix dans les églises byzantines du X^e au XII^e siècle," *Byzantiaka* 29 (2010/11): 233–54; R. Warland, *Byzantinisches Kappadokien* (Mainz, 2013), 58–65; Jolivet-Lévy and Lemaigre Demesnil, *Cappadoce*; Jolivet-Lévy, "De l'aniconisme en Cappadoce"; Ousterhout, *Visualizing Community*; A. L. McMichael, "Rising Above the Faithful: Monumental Ceiling Crosses in Byzantine Cappadocia" (PhD diss., City University of New York, 2018), https://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_etds/2553.

211 For example, the Church of Three Crosses/Üç Haçlı at Güllüdere 3 and the chapel of the Stylite Nicetas or Üzümlü Kilise at Güllüdere/Kızılçukur: Jolivet-Lévy, *Les églises byzantines de Cappadoce*, 31–36, 53–56; Thierry, *Haut Moyen-âge en Cappadoce* (above, n. 43), 1:117–33, 2:255–81; Lemaigre Demesnil, *Architecture rupestre* (above, n. 40), 37–41, 50–51.

212 For fig. 32, see Thierry and Thierry, *Nouvelles églises*, 115–36, pls. 63–64; Ousterhout, *Visualizing Community*, 203–4, figs. 2.30–31. For fig. 33, see below, n. 221.

213 Thierry, "La croix en Cappadoce," 203, figs. 19–20 on pl. 7; Jolivet-Lévy, *Les églises byzantines de Cappadoce*, 44–46, pl. 36; M. Xenaki, "Ornement et texte: Le cas de l'ensemble funéraire de Karşıbecak à Göreme, Cappadoce," in *L'aniconisme*, 159–69; Ousterhout, *Visualizing Community*, 64–66, 199, 209–10, figs. 2.38, 2.39.

205 See above, n. 21.

206 *Vita Basilii* (= *Theophanes Continuatus*, book 5), chap. 89: *Chronographiae Quae Theophanis Continuati Nomine Fertur Liber Quo Vita Basilii Imperatoris Amplectitur*, ed. I. Ševčenko, CFHB 42 (Berlin, 2011), 292–93.

207 An early date would also help explain the differences in comparison to the eleventh-century mosaics in the narthex of the Church of the Dormition: C. Mango, "The Date of the Narthex Mosaics of the Church of the Dormition at Nicaea," *DOP* 13 (1959): 245–52.

208 The dates that have been suggested on stylistic grounds range from the ninth to the eleventh century: Mavropoulou-Tsioumi,



Fig. 32.
Large cross in an ornamental setting and a flanking row of apostles on the ceiling of the nave of Kokar Kilise in the Peristrema/Ihlara Valley of Cappadocia, middle Byzantine period. Photo author.



Fig. 33.
St. Basil near Mustafapaşa in Cappadocia; nave and apse of the south chapel, the nave with a large cross in an ornamental setting, the apse with several less colorful crosses on a plain background, flanked by St. Basil and St. Gregory, middle Byzantine period. Photo A. L. McMichael, 2011.

the vault over the nave,²¹⁴ that is, the same locations as the carved crosses of late antiquity.

Numerous middle Byzantine apse and ceiling crosses have highly ornamental and colorful settings (figs. 32–37) that distinguish them from the less adorned tradition of early Christian crosses with monochrome backgrounds (figs. 1–3, 12). These may help in dating them where no other evidence is available. The highly ornamental and colorful settings may relate to locations on vaulted ceilings, as some (with or without crosses) had long since been decorated with a particularly ornamental and colorful repertoire, more than was customary on walls and floors. Examples from Constantinople include the vaulted ceiling of the southwest vestibule of Hagia Sophia, formerly the vestibule of the patriarchate, from the later sixth century (fig. 4); the vaulting in the north aisle of Hagia Irene from the later eighth century (fig. 28); and a vault in the imperial palace to the east of Hagia Sophia that has been attributed to the middle Byzantine period.²¹⁵ The vault in the imperial palace is decorated with four-petaled flowers that compare to similar ones on architectural ceramics from a middle Byzantine renovation of a room in the Hospital of Sampson, between Hagia Sophia and Hagia Irene.²¹⁶ The room also included figural wall paintings, and the renovation likely dates from the 970s.

Another vaulted ceiling with a cross medallion in a highly ornamental and colorful setting survives in a southern side chapel of St. Nicholas at Myra/Demre in Lycia (fig. 34).²¹⁷ The relation to other figural frescoes on the walls of that chapel and in other rooms of the church provides a middle Byzantine date, and the combination of a central cross in an ornamental setting with surrounding figures compares to those of middle

Byzantine Cappadocia. The ornaments, in this case scrolling tendrils, may also be likened to the decoration of architectural ceramics from the middle Byzantine renovation of the Hospital of Sampson.²¹⁸

Four churches and chapels in southern Asia Minor and on Cyprus each have an opulently patterned cross medallion in the (semi-)dome above the apse. While these cross medallions are hard to date individually, as a group they may be assigned to the middle Byzantine period. This dating appears to be confirmed by the colorful ornaments that fill the medallions and the surrounding domes, and compare to the similarly ornamental settings of apse and ceiling crosses in middle Byzantine Cappadocia.²¹⁹

One opulent cross medallion adorns the apse dome of a ruined chapel at Oba near Alanya, on the border of Pamphylia and Cilicia (fig. 35).²²⁰ The walls of the chapel are painted with graphic crosses in the simpler early Christian tradition, and the contrast between the opulently patterned cross medallion in the apse dome and the plain wall crosses has parallels in middle Byzantine Cappadocia. There some cave churches also combine highly ornamental and colorful ceiling crosses with relatively plain and graphic wall crosses, for example, in the south chapel of St. Basil near Mustafapaşa (fig. 33) and the northern chapel of Eğritaş Kilisesi in the Peristrema/Ihlara Valley.²²¹ At Oba, the lack of surviving figural depictions has led to suggestions of an earlier Iconoclast or a later Turkish date, but the former appears to be excluded by the paleography of an inscription that suggests a middle Byzantine or later date,²²² and the latter seems highly unlikely, considering the middle Byzantine comparanda, a lack of

214 N. Thierry, “Le culte de la croix dans l’empire byzantin du VII^e siècle au X^e dans ses rapports avec la guerre contre l’infidèle,” *RSBS* 1 (1981): 205–28; Warland, *Byzantinisches Kappadokien*, 58–65; Xenaki, “Ornement et texte”; Ousterhout, *Visualizing Community*, 198–204, figs. 2.26–31; McMichael, “Rising Above the Faithful.”

215 A. Denker, “Excavations at the Byzantine Great Palace (Palatium Magnum) in the Area of the Old Sultanahmet Jail,” in *The Byzantine Court*, ed. A. Ödekan, N. Necipoğlu, and E. Akyürek (Istanbul, 2013), 13–24, esp. 15, fig. 4.

216 *A Lost Art Rediscovered: The Architectural Ceramics of Byzantium*, ed. S. E. J. Gerstel and J. A. Lauffenburger (Baltimore, 2001), 9, 26–27, 176, 180–81, no. II.14.

217 Doğan et al., *Demre–Myra: Aziz Nikolaos Kilisesi* (above, n. 140), 93.

218 *Lost Art Rediscovered*, 9, 26–27, 176, 180–81, no. II.17.

219 A. Foulías, “Η ανεικονική ζωγραφική στην Αγία Παρασκευή Γεροσκήπου,” *Κυπριακαί Σπουδαί* 67–68 (2003–4): 123–43; C. A. Hadjichristodoulou, “Aniconic Cyprus,” in *L’aniconisme*, 205–10, esp. 207–9.

220 L. Yılmaz, “An Unknown Chapel in Oba-Alanya,” *Belleten* 70.259 (2006): 821–33.

221 G. de Jerphanion, *Les églises rupestres de Cappadoce*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1925–42), 2:105–11; N. Teteriatnikov, “The Frescoes of the Chapel of St. Basil in Cappadocia,” *CahArch* 40 (1992): 99–114; Ousterhout, *Visualizing Community*, 67–68, 199–202, figs. 1.53, 2.27; McMichael, “Rising Above the Faithful,” 333–34, figs. 4.30–32.

222 Yılmaz, “An Unknown Chapel in Olba,” 287, n. 33 (D. Feissel).



Fig. 34. Vaulted ceiling with a central cross medallion in an ornamental setting above the anteroom to the second side chapel to the south of St. Nicholas at Myra/Demre in Lycia, middle Byzantine period. Photo U. Peschlow.

Turkish-period comparanda, as well as figural scenes in securely dated Turkish-period churches of the region.²²³

A second opulent cross medallion occupies the apse dome of the south aisle at Chimera/Yanartaş near Olympus in Lycia (fig. 36).²²⁴ The small church ruin marks a spot where a burning gas emits from a

steep hillside, once associated with the mythological Chimera.²²⁵ The apse with the cross medallion belongs to a second building phase, for which all the surviving frescoes are aniconic. The first phase included a figural scene and appears to date from the middle Byzantine period.²²⁶ The second consists of structural repairs that respond to large cracks, where the eastern part of the church is leaning to the east, down the steep slope that does not seem to provide a stable foundation. The cracks may have started to appear within years after the church was completed, as soon as the mortar had

223 L. Yılmaz, "Akdeniz Kıyı Şeridinde Alanya Oba Şapeli ve Alanya-Tophane Şapel A: Bizans Geleneğini Sürdüren Geç Osmanlı Dönemi Taşra Kiliseleri," in *Bizans ve Çevre Kùltürler: Prof. Dr. S. Yıldız Ötüken'e Armağan*, ed. S. Doğan (Istanbul, 2010), 385–98; L. Yılmaz, "The Churches of Late Ottoman Period in Alanya," in *14th International Congress of Turkish Art*, ed. F. Hitzel (Paris, 2013), 877–85.

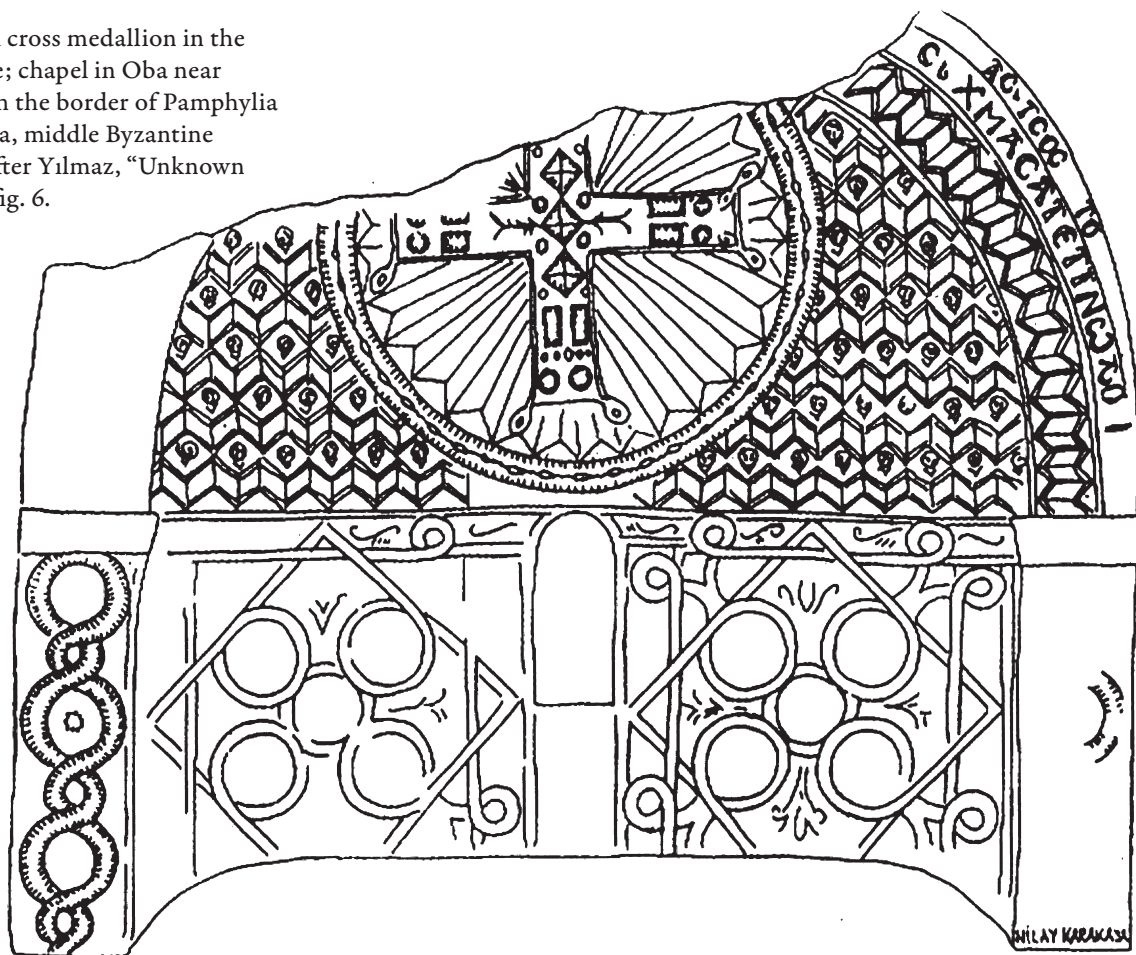
224 Ruggieri and Zäh, *Visiting the Byzantine Wall Paintings in Turkey*, 38, figs. 72–73.

225 V. Ruggieri, F. Giordano, and A. Furnari, "Gli affreschi iconoclastici della chiesa di Chimera," *CabArch* 44 (1996): 33–48.

226 Hild and Hellenkemper, *Lykien und Pamphylien*, 503–4.

Fig. 35.

Apse with cross medallion in the semidome; chapel in Oba near Alanya, on the border of Pamphylia and Cilicia, middle Byzantine period. After Yılmaz, “Unknown Chapel,” fig. 6.



fully hardened, and the second building phase may thus have followed soon after, within the middle Byzantine period.

A third cross medallion with highly ornamental and colorful patterning decorates an apse dome of a triconch chapel next to a large early Christian basilica and likely cathedral of neighboring Olympus.²²⁷ The basilica had collapsed probably during the seventh to ninth centuries, when Lycia suffered Arab raids and most every basilica in the region fell in, apparently from lack of roof maintenance.²²⁸ The reduced middle Byzantine population seems to have had no use for large basilicas,

and maintenance was typically restricted to smaller churches and chapels, either preexisting or newly built in place of the earlier churches. At Olympus, which appears to have been abandoned after the later Turkish conquest of the region,²²⁹ middle Byzantine reuse can explain why the basilica ruin was virtually free from rubble, and the triconch chapel was likely painted at the same time so it could serve as a replacement church.

A fourth opulent cross medallion occupies a dome above the apse of St. Paraskevi at Geroskipou near Paphos on Cyprus (fig. 37),²³⁰ off the south coast of Asia Minor, which in the middle Byzantine period

227 Ruggieri and Zäh, *Visiting the Byzantine Wall Paintings in Turkey*, 38, n. 92, fig. 74; Çorağan, “Olympos’taki Bizans Dönemi’ne Ait Duvar Resimleri” (above, n. 70), 145–66, esp. 148–51, 157, drawings 2, 159–60, figs. 3–4.

228 Hild and Hellenkemper, *Lycien und Pamphylien*, 225–27.

229 Ibid., 762.

230 Foulías, “Η ανεικονική ζωγραφική στην Αγία Παρασκευή Γεροσκήπου”; Hadjichristodoulou, “Aniconic Cyprus,” 207–9; Ruggieri and Zäh, *Visiting the Byzantine Wall Paintings in Turkey*, 38, n. 92, fig. 75.



Fig. 36. Semidome of the apse with cross medallion; south aisle of the church at Chimera near Olympus in Lycia, middle Byzantine period. Photo author, 2000.

was also administered from the same regional metropolis of Antalya.²³¹ The patterning of the medallion with radial lamellae closely resembles the medallion cross in the southern apse dome at Chimera (fig. 36). Other figural frescoes were added to St. Paraskevi in the twelfth century, but the medallion cross appears to belong to the original building phase of the middle Byzantine church.

It has been suggested that the cross medallions at Chimera and in St. Paraskevi should date from the second Iconoclast episode in the first half of the ninth century, but in light of the long and continuing tradition of aniconic decorative schemes in Asia Minor, this argument no longer seems tenable. On Cyprus, aniconic decoration and figural scenes may have always coexisted, including during Iconoclasm, possibly because

Constantinopolitan control over the island was weakened by the Arab presence in the region.²³² This leaves stylistic considerations as the only way of dating these cross medallions, which most likely belong to the middle Byzantine period.

232 The issue is highly controversial; cf. A. Foulías, “Ανεικονικός διάκοσμος και μία πρώιμη βυζαντινή επιγραφή από τον ναό της Αγ. Αθανασίας στο Ριζοκάρπασο,” *Byzantina* 30 (2010): 203–29; Hadjichristodoulou, “Aniconic Cyprus”; C. G. Chotzakoglou, “The Cultural Network of Cyprus–Constantinople–Euxine Pontos during the Iconoclasm Era,” in *Proceedings of the Symposium on City Ports from the Aegean to the Black Sea*, ed. F. Karagianni and U. Kocabaş (Istanbul, 2015), 191–201; idem, “Εικονομαχία (726–787 και 813–843) και τέχνη στην Κύπρο και το θεωρητικό της υπόβαθρο: Μία κριτική εξέταση βάσει των πηγών και των μνημείων της Μεγαλονήσου,” in *Κυπριακή αγιολογία. Πρακτικά Α΄ διεθνούς συνεδρίου, Παραλίμνι, 9–12 Φεβρουαρίου 2012*, ed. Th. Yangou and Ch. Nassis (Agia Napa, 2015), 527–66.

231 Hild and Hellenkemper, *Lykien und Pamphylien*, 122, 126.



Fig. 37. Cross medallion in the dome above the apse of St. Paraskevi at Geroskipou near Paphos on Cyprus, middle Byzantine period. Photo V. Ruggieri.

An analogous case can be made for the frescoes of Al Oda (Ottoman Turkish: Red Room), an isolated cave church and monastery halfway between the south coast and Cappadocia, in the Isaurian part of the Taurus mountain range.²³³ The apse has been blackened with soot, but the walls and vaults are frescoed with geometrical and vegetal carpet patterns, large crosses at the crown of the nave vault, numerous

smaller crosses, as well as a dove and the head of an ox that may symbolize the Holy Spirit and the evangelist Luke. Figural scenes were added later in a different style. The original, aniconic paintings have been attributed to the period of Iconoclasm, but earlier or later dates seem equally possible. F. W. Deichmann suggested late antiquity, which would be compatible with a floor mosaic, but that may date back to more ancient times.²³⁴ Stylistically, the closest comparanda

233 G. Köroğlu, "Al Oda (Ala Oda) Kaya Kilisesi," in *Celal Esad Arseven Anısına Sanat Tarihi Semineri Bildirileri*, ed. B. Mahir (Istanbul, 2000), 388–97; N. Thierry, "Les peintures iconoclastes d'Al Oda en Isaurie," in *L'aniconisme*, 149–58.

234 M. Gough, "A Church of the Iconoclast (?) Period in Byzantine Isauria," *AnatStud* 7 (1957): 153–61; F. W. Deichmann, review of *ibid.*, *BZ* 50 (1957): 552.



Fig. 38. Cross medallions and middle Byzantine inscription in the Cave of the Apostles on Mount Latmos in Caria. Photo U. Peschlow.

are middle Byzantine frescoes in cave churches of Cappadocia, which would seem to provide the best dating, although an earlier date during or even before Iconoclasm cannot be ruled out.

A similar discussion has evolved around aniconic cross frescoes in ascetic cave sanctuaries on Mount Latmos in Caria, near the west coast of Asia Minor, with suggested dates from late antiquity via Iconoclasm to the middle Byzantine period (fig. 38).²³⁵ Fortunately, these frescoes include inscriptions, and their palaeography appears to point to the middle Byzantine period.²³⁶ Dipinti with crosses on the walls

of a cave in the vicinity of Germia in Galatia, on the central Anatolian high plateau, seem to be less distinct (figs. 39 and 40),²³⁷ and crosses with four flanking dots or rosettes, one in each quarter, also occur among the early Christian carved ceiling crosses of Cappadocia (fig. 9), on early Byzantine door lintels in Syria, as well as on later Byzantine lead seals.²³⁸

235 T. Wiegand, *Der Latmos*, Milet 3.1 (Berlin, 1913), 91–94; A. Kirby and Z. Mercangöz, “The Monasteries of Mt. Latros and Their Architectural Development,” in *Work and Worship at the Theotokos Evergetis, 1050–1200*, ed. A. Kirby and M. Mullett, Belfast Byzantine Texts and Translations 6.2 (Belfast, 1997), 51–77, esp. 54–59 (Iconoclasm); Ruggieri and Zäh, *Visiting the Byzantine Wall Paintings in Turkey*, 75–77 (late antiquity); U. Peschlow, “Mount Latmos,” in *Archaeology of Byzantine Anatolia* (above, n. 65), 264–68, esp. 266–67, fig. 22.3.

236 H. Grégoire, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques chrétiennes d’Asie Mineure* (Paris, 1922), 76, no. 227bis–quater; H. Grégoire, “Les sauterelles de Saint Jean-Baptiste,” *Byzantion* 5.1 (1929–30): 109–28, esp. 109.

237 Numerous crosses and various accompanying votive dipinti in the Yelini Cave. On the cave, see L. Nazik et al., *Orta Sakarya Havzasının (Eskişehir ve Bilecik Doğusu) Doğal Mağaraları*, MTA Raporu Derleme 10420 (Ankara, 2001), 150–56, s.v. Yelini Mağarası. Numerous cut limestone blocks inside the mouth of the cave date from late antiquity, among them several mullions. Further inside, cut limestone blocks as well as bricks and water-resistant pink lime mortar with brick dust form a retaining wall. For similar dipinti from the middle Byzantine period on the Cycladic island of Tinos, see D. Feissel, “Inscriptions byzantines de Ténos,” *BCH* 104.1 (1980): 477–518.

238 Cappadocia: Lemaigre Demesnil, *Architecture rupestre*, 37–41, 65–68; Ousterhout, *Visualizing Community*, 41–42, figs. 1.20–22. Door lintels: e.g., C. Strube, *Al Andarin, das antike Androna*, Monographien des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums 121 (Mainz, 2005), 241–42, pl. 134.1. Lead seals: V. Laurent, *Le corpus des sceaux de l’Empire byzantin* 5.3 (Paris, 1972), 54–55, nos. 1690A, 1690B, pls. 10–11 (Theodore, archbishop of Ephesus); G. Zacos and A. Vegliery, *Byzantine Lead Seals* 1.2 (Basel, 1972), 825, no. 1350, pl. 105.

Fig. 39.
Several crosses and
staurograms as well as a
votive dipinto on the rock
wall of the Yelini Cave
above the Sangarius/
Sakarya river valley in the
vicinity of Germia in
Galatia. The inscription
reads Κ(ύρι)ε βοήθη την
δούλην σου Ἀναν (Lord
help your servant Anna).
Photo author, 2010.



To conclude, while some of the crosses under discussion here may (or may not) date from the period of Iconoclasm, firm evidence exists for middle Byzantine sanctuaries from after the period in Constantinople, Cappadocia, southern Asia Minor, and on Mount Latmos that remained focused on the cross, with or without figural scenes. Cappadocia has been documented best, and the middle Byzantine monuments there continue an early Christian

tradition. It is tempting to think that this tradition faded out slowly, as iconic apse images became customary over time, but this would require a more precise dating of the middle Byzantine crosses, which does not yet seem possible. However, the distinctive style of many middle Byzantine crosses with more ornamental and colorful settings also helps confirm the earlier, late antique dates of the less flamboyant crosses discussed above.



Fig. 40. Two more crosses with flanking dots on the rock wall of the Yelini Cave. Photo author, 2010.

Conclusions

The longevity of the cross as the main decorative feature of middle Byzantine churches and sanctuaries suggests that although Iconoclasm had ended by 843, the Iconoclast controversy may have continued, at least insofar as and for as long as the choice between a cross and a figure remained an open question. A substantial body of iconophile writings from after 843 corresponds with this scenario of a controversy that extended into the middle Byzantine period.²³⁹ The

long and almost exclusive earlier tradition of the cross in Constantinople and Asia Minor can explain why it took time to establish the centrality of figural imagery after 843, first as an alternative to the cross and later as the default apse image. The only crosses that were replaced with figural images more or less immediately after the end of Iconoclasm are those that were known or believed to have been previously substituted for figures in acts of iconoclasm.

It seems, then, that the iconoclast significance of the cross, which led to its post-Iconoclast replacement with figural images, resulted from inverse substitutions during the second Iconoclast episode in the ninth century (on the Chalke Gate and in the Church of the Dormition), and that these substitutions had responded to the first appearances of large,

239 E.g., C. Mango, "The Liquidation of Iconoclasm and the Patriarch Photius," in *Iconoclasm* (above, n. 6), 133–40; H. G. Thümmel, "Eine wenig bekannte Schrift zur Bilderfrage," in *Studien zum 8. und 9. Jahrhundert in Byzanz*, ed. H. Köpstein and F. Winkelmann, BBA 51 (Berlin, 1983), 153–57.

Cf. also the Khludov Psalter as above, n. 12, as well as a twelfth-century recourse to iconoclast polemic: M. Campagnolo-Pothitou,

"Comme un relent d'iconoclisme' au début du XII^e siècle: Le témoignage sigillographique," in *L'aniconisme* (above, n. 16), 175–91.

monumental, and public images in Constantinople and Asia Minor during the reign of Irene in the later eighth century. Before that, during late antiquity and through the first Iconoclast episode, from the fourth to the eighth century, the cross seems to have been the primary Christian symbol and default sanctuary decoration in Constantinople and Asia Minor.

The development of domed and cross-in-square churches²⁴⁰ appears to have preceded (and thus to have been independent of) the Pantokrator image of Christ and related iconographic schemes of the middle Byzantine period.²⁴¹ Earlier figural representations in the region were typically limited to narrative scenes in secondary positions, and icons remained exceptional. As numerous narrative scenes from late antiquity survived Iconoclasm unscathed, the controversy was clearly concerned mainly with figural apse images and portable icons of the kind that were not customary in late antique Constantinople and Asia Minor. It also follows that figural apse images were as much at issue during Iconoclasm as were icons and their veneration. This appears to confirm the notion that apse images were linked to the issue of image veneration, not through formal worship but clearly in an associated capacity.

The available evidence is scant, but it may be augmented by an argument from silence, considering the ubiquity of figural apse images, icons, and their veneration in other regions of the late antique empire, which makes their paucity in Constantinople and Asia Minor stand out in comparison. Such a comparison also offers an explanation for the hitherto enigmatic origin of Byzantine Iconoclasm,²⁴² which, in turn, further strengthens the above scenario. Hence, Iconoclasm may have come about as a result of the seventh-century collapse of the pan-Mediterranean empire,²⁴³ which

reduced Byzantium to little more than Constantinople and Asia Minor.²⁴⁴ In consequence, the various iconic traditions of the vast earlier empire had to be accommodated within the relatively small and hitherto essentially aniconic rump state (or otherwise drop out of Byzantine Orthodoxy). This can explain both how figures in general, and icons and their veneration in particular, gained importance in Constantinople from the seventh century onward (e.g., the Camouliana image of Christ),²⁴⁵ and why they were met with resistance.

Thus, it may not have been incidental that the first more or less iconoclast emperor Leo III originated from Germanikeia/Maraş in southeast Anatolia,²⁴⁶ and that the iconoclast council that Constantine V convened at Hieria outside Constantinople in 754 was attended almost exclusively by bishops from Asia Minor,²⁴⁷ where icon veneration does not appear to have been customary.

This scenario can also explain why both iconoclasts and iconophiles could claim adherence to ancient traditions beyond the conventions of the literary topos,²⁴⁸ as both traditions appear to have existed

developments but have been criticized for failing to account satisfactorily for the theological aspect of the controversy, e.g., E. N. Boeck, "Review of Brubaker and Haldon, *A History*," *Speculum* 88.3 (2013): 1–3. This article provides the missing explanation for the theological dispute and puts to rest the modern scholarly dispute on the origins of image veneration, for which see below, n. 251.

244 J. F. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, 1997); idem, *The Empire That Would Not Die: The Paradox of Eastern Roman Survival, 640–740* (Cambridge, MA, 2016).

245 Thümmel, *Die Konzilien* (above, n. 24), 23–32; Brubaker and Haldon, *A History*, 58–62; M.-F. Auzépy, "Le rôle des émigrés orientaux à Constantinople et dans l'Empire (634–843)," *Al-Qanṭara* 33.2 (2012): 475–503.

246 *PmbZ* 1.2:662–68, s.v. Leon III 4242. Cf. A. Grabar, *L'iconoclisme byzantine* (Paris, 1957), 94–99; H. Ahrweiler, "The Geography of the Iconoclast World," in *Iconoclasm*, 21–28; N. Thierry, "Topographie ponctuelle de l'iconomachie en Asie Mineure," in *Εὐψυχία: Mélanges offerts à Hélène Ahrweiler*, 2 vols., ed. M. Balard et al., Byzantina Sorbonensia 16 (Paris, 1998), 2:651–72. For an assessment of Leo III's iconoclasm, see Brubaker and Haldon, *A History*, 69–155; Humphreys, "Images of Authority" (above, n. 187).

247 *Concilium universale Nicaenum secundum: Concilii actiones VI–VII*, ed. E. Lamberz, ACO 2.3.3 (Berlin, 2016), 600–793; Theophanes, *Chronographia*, 1:427 (Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, 591); Brubaker and Haldon, *A History*, 190–91.

248 M.-F. Auzépy, "La tradition comme arme du pouvoir: L'exemple de la querelle iconoclaste," in *L'autorité du passé dans les sociétés médiévales*, ed. J.-M. Sansterre, Collection de l'École française de Rome 333 = Institut historique belge de Rome, Bibliothèque 52

240 Ruggieri, *Byzantine Religious Architecture* (582–867); H. Buchwald and M. Savage, "Churches," in *Archaeology of Byzantine Anatolia*, 139–47, esp. 138–42; R. Ousterhout, *Eastern Medieval Architecture* (Oxford, 2019), 245–65.

241 Any "teleological interpretation" (O. Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration* [London, 1947], 11) is therefore unwarranted. Cf. R. Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, 4th ed. (London, 1986), 343–44; R. Ousterhout, *Master Builders of Byzantium* (Princeton, 1999), 23; Buchwald and Savage, "Churches," 142.

242 Brandes, "Bilder und Synoden" (above, n. 24).

243 Brubaker and Haldon (*A History*, above, n. 4) argue likewise that Iconoclasm came about mainly as a result of sociopolitical

in different parts of the late antique empire. Emperors or their envoys, who built and decorated churches throughout the various provinces of the early Christian ecumene, must have been aware of, and catered to, the different conventions; compare, for example, Justinian's Hagia Sophia, possibly without any prominent figural images, and his church at the monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai, with a large-scale and frontal mosaic image of the transfigured Jesus in the semidome of the apse.²⁴⁹ The argument raised in E. Kitzinger's paradigmatic 1954 article "The Cult of Images in the Age before Iconoclasm,"²⁵⁰ which pitted evidence for early Christian image veneration against that for a later onset of the cult of the icon,²⁵¹ may be put to rest, as both iconic and aniconic traditions seem to have occurred simultaneously in different parts of the late antique empire.

It has long since been recognized that the plans and liturgical furnishings of early Christian churches varied throughout the many provinces of the far-flung empire,²⁵² for example, the Syrian bema and basilicas with wide arcades as opposed to the Constantinopolitan standard.²⁵³ Regional variation appears to have

been a fundamental quality of early Christian art and architecture,²⁵⁴ and to have extended to decorative schemes and attitudes toward images more generally. Conversely, a city such as Constantinople—or any other place that attracted people from all over the empire—would have always been exposed to a "polyphony" of early Christian beliefs and practices,²⁵⁵ which can account for deviations from the local norm, in particular for portable icons, as with the four mentioned in the Life of Theodore of Sykeon in Galatia, on the central Anatolian high plateau.

Thus, the collapse of the Eastern Roman Empire, and in particular the loss of most iconophile provinces over the course of the seventh century, appears to have been a precondition of Iconoclasm. Considering the decision-making and voting procedures at ecumenical councils,²⁵⁶ it seems highly unlikely that Iconoclasm would have been agreed upon if the iconophile provinces had still been a major part of the empire and congregation. Whether icon veneration would have been established as dogma without an influx of iconophile refugees and otherwise than as response to Iconoclasm remains anyone's guess. It has proven notoriously difficult to gauge the spread of icons and image veneration in pre-Iconoclast Constantinople and Asia Minor and to judge whether they would have taken root on their own, independently of political events.²⁵⁷ The contemporary

(Rome, 2004), 79–92, repr. in idem, *L'histoire des iconoclastes*, Bilans de recherche 2 (Paris, 2007), 105–18; D. Gwynn, "From Iconoclasm to Arianism: The Construction of Christian Tradition in the Iconoclast Controversy," *GRBS* 47 (2007): 225–51; Brubaker and Haldon, *A History*, 139, 284–85; J. M. Featherstone, "Icons and Cultural Identity," in *L'aniconisme*, 105–13.

249 See above, n. 149.

250 *DOP* 8 (1954): 85–150.

251 See above, nn. 141–145, as well as, with emphasis on the modern scholarly dispute, L. Brubaker, "Icons before Iconoclasm?," in *Morfologie sociali e culturali in Europa fra tarda antichità e alto medioevo: 3–9 aprile 1997*, 2 vols., Settimane 45 (Spoleto, 1998), 2:1215–54; J.-M. Sansterre, "Entre deux mondes? Le vénération des images à Rome et en Italie d'après les textes des 6^e–11^e siècles," in *Roma fra oriente e occidente: 19–24 aprile 2001*, 2 vols., Settimane 49 (Spoleto, 2002), 2:993–1050, esp. 993–1000; Brubaker and Haldon, *A History*, 32–68; W. Treadgold, "Review of Brubaker, *Inventing Byzantine Iconoclasm*," *The Historian* 75.4 (2013): 880–81.

252 U. Verstegen, "Die symbolische Raumordnung frühchristlicher Basiliken des 4. bis 6. Jahrhunderts," *RACr* 85 (2009): 567–600; O. Brandt, *La croce e il capitello: Le chiese paleocristiane e la monumentalità*, Sussidi allo studio delle antichità Cristiane 28 (Rome, 2016); Ousterhout, *Eastern Medieval Architecture*, 101–34.

253 For Syria, see G. Descoeudres, *Die Pastophorien im syro-byzantinischen Osten* (Wiesbaden, 1983); G. Tchalenko, *Églises syriennes à bema*, Bibliothèque archéologique et historique 105 (Paris, 1990); E. Loosley, *The Architecture and Liturgy of the Bema*

in *Fourth-to-Sixth-Century Syrian Churches*, Texts and Studies in Eastern Christianity 1 (Leiden, 2012). For Constantinople, see T. F. Mathews, *The Early Churches of Constantinople: Architecture and Liturgy* (University Park, PA, 1971); Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans* (above, n. 59), 98–99. Cf. also Ousterhout, *Eastern Medieval Architecture*, 37–42. R. Haensch ("Der Kirchenbau in der dioecesis Asiana: Ein Vergleich mit dem Kirchenbau in den Patriarchaten Antiocheia und Jerusalem und dem in Italien," in *Die Christianisierung Kleinasien in der Spätantike*, ed. W. Ameling, Asia Minor Studien 87 [Bonn, 2017], 331–92) reaches analogous conclusions through the study of church building inscriptions.

254 P. Niewöhner "The Regional Paradigm in Early Christian Art and Architecture," in *Proceedings of the Fifth International Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium*, ed. E. Akyürek (Istanbul, in press).

255 H. Leppin, "Christianisierungen im römischen Reich," *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 16 (2012): 247–78.

256 E.g., above, nn. 22, 110, 147, 197, and 247.

257 As not even the contemporaries could agree on this matter—hence the Iconoclast dispute—it seems prudent to let it rest.

rise of Islam and its aniconic stance,²⁵⁸ as well as the Byzantine–Arab conflict,²⁵⁹ may have sharpened both iconophile and iconoclast sensibilities and thus contributed to the “outbreak” of Iconoclasm,²⁶⁰ but according to the evidence presented here the Iconoclast controversy was first and foremost homegrown and rooted in differing early Christian traditions.

Most importantly, this article suggests that Byzantine Iconoclasm was essentially not an aggressive charge against an established cult of images, as in the case of the sixteenth-century Reformation,²⁶¹ but a

defensive move against the arrival of image veneration to a hitherto largely aniconic region, namely, Constantinople and Asia Minor. This perception of Byzantine Iconoclasm is based on the understanding that early Christian art and iconography prior to Iconoclasm could vary greatly not only in form but also in substance across the distant regions of the extensive empire, with the most brilliant icons and their veneration fully established in some provinces, while others, notably Constantinople and Asia Minor, remained focused on the symbol of the cross.²⁶² Historically speaking, the Iconoclast controversy may thus be said to have reduced the early Christian “polyphony” to a single dogma, as appears to have been required by the small scale of the remaining Byzantine rump state.²⁶³

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258 On the latter, see n. 50. Cf. also the analogous development of Jewish aniconism: P. Prigent, *Le Judaïsme et l'image*, Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum 24 (Tübingen, 1990). Cf. also the relation of Armenian Iconoclasm and Islam, as Armenian attitudes may have informed the Byzantine discourse, in particular the many Armenian immigrants to Constantinople: A. B. Schmidt, “Gab es einen armenischen Ikonoklasmus?,” in *Das Frankfurter Konzil von 794*, ed. R. Berndt, Quellen und Abhandlungen zur mittelhochdeutschen Kirchengeschichte 80 (Mainz, 1997), 947–66; I. Rapti, “Le statut des images dans l’art et le culte arméniens,” in *L’aniconisme*, 59–74.

259 Brubaker and Haldon, *A History*, 774–82; M. Humphreys, “The ‘War of Images’ Revisited.”

260 For aristocratic rivalry as yet another possible contributing factor, see J.-C. Cheynet, “L’aristocratie byzantine (VIII^e–XIII^e siècle),” *JSav* (2000): 281–322.

261 Cf. D. Freedberg, “The Structure of Byzantine and European Iconoclasm,” in *Iconoclasm*, ed. A. Bryer and J. Herrin (Birmingham, 1977), 165–77; J. Elsner, “Image and Iconoclasm in Byzantium,” *Art History* 11.4 (1988): 471–91; J. Elsner, “Iconoclasm as Discourse,” *ArtB* 94.3 (2012): 368–94; S. Sande, “Conclusion: Iconoclasm in History and Present-Day Use of Images,” in *Iconoclasm from*

Antiquity to Modernity, ed. K. Kolrud and M. Prusac (Farnham, 2014), 171–88.

262 A similar variation, albeit with somewhat different regional boundaries, is evident in the iconography of floor mosaics, as I hope to show on a future occasion.

263 Pallas, “Eine anikonische lineare Wanddekoration auf der Insel Ikaria,” 309–10 comes to the same conclusion.

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